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**AN APPEAL TO READERS**

**FOR INTEREST FREE DEPOSITS FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HALL**

The details of the Fire Tragedy to the great monument of National Integration and Cultural Synthesis, viz., "SHANMUKHANANDA HALL" and the post-fire operations have already been outlined in the Appeal published on page 11 of the April 1990 issue of "Shanmukha" Journal requesting contributions from Readers.

We would once again stress that the massive repairs to and the rebuilding of this wonderful edifice is expected to cost about Rs. 8 crores. As mentioned earlier, we are requesting contributions from the performing Artistes, organisers of programmes, Business & Charitable Bodies, Philanthropic Individuals and Institutions, Readers of this Magazine, General Public, State and Union Governments.

Besides, in order that our mobilisation drive for Funds be more purposeful and result-oriented, it has been decided that we should embark on a drive for collection of INTEREST FREE DEPOSIT of a minimum of Rs. 1000/- from Members of the Sabha, Readers of our Magazine and from the Public.

Keeping in view the Sabha's position and the likely period for resuming its normal functioning in all aspects, It is considered that the minimum period for repayment of Interest Free Deposit should be such that the Sabha gets enough respite before attaining the capability to return the Deposit without strain. It is, therefore, decided that the minimum period of Interest Free Deposits be FIVE YEARS.

May I, therefore, request you to help the cause by contributing Interest Free Deposits to the maximum extent possible.

Payment may be made by Cheque drawn in favour of the Sabha or by cash. The Receipts will be sent to you later.

27th June, 1990

**Dr. V. Subramanian**  
President & Chairman

# ARIYAKUDI : A SOFT COLOSSUS

By

LAKSHMI KUMAR

The age of the Trinity is described as the Golden Age of Karnatak Music. The preceding period was portrayed as the Crimson dawn. Are we now nearing the monotonous mid-day? The Sisya-Parampara of Tyagarajaswami is indicative of chronological continuity. Tyagarajaswami, Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar, Patnam Subramanya Ayyar, Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Iyengar and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar — so goes the disciple lineage. Thus, to many of us, Ariyakudi was a link between the Golden Age and the current era.

Many of us have been fortunate to listen to Ariyakudi in his heydays — the nineteen forties and fifties, in particular. We shall cherish his memory, his artistic abilities forever — more so, in his centenary year.

## CUTCHERI PADDATHI

We shall attempt an appreciation of some of the vignettes of this maestro rather than go through a biographic narrative.

The Cutcheri-Paddathi presently in vogue, starting with a Varnam, a Ganesha Stuti, a Swarajati or Swara-oriented compositions, a few racy pieces with Sangatis, a few Vilambakala compositions interspersed with Madhyamakala compositions, a Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi of judicious duration, followed by concluding pieces like Padams and Tillana — is without doubt, a

legacy by Ariyakudi to posterity. This format has survived five decades already. Minor aberrations apart, none of us can think of presentations at a cutcheri in any other form or sequence. Ariyakudi's memorable renditions are indented with each genre referred to, say, the Varnam *Vanajaksha* (Kalyani), *Siddhi Vinayakam* (Shanmukhapriya), *Endaro Mahanubhavulu* (Sri Raga) and so on.

The next facet is the choice of Ragas in cutcheris. Ariyakudi inevitably chose Rakti Ragas for major items. Ariyakudi is identified with compositions in Rakti Ragas like *Koluvamaregada* and *Amba Nannu Brova* in Todi, *Swara Raga Sudha* and *Enduku Pedalavale* in Shankarabharanam, *Sri Subramanyaya* (Khamboji) etc. There was no need for Ragas like *Sunadavinodini*, *Revati*, *Shivaranjani* and *Nasikabhooshani* in his concerts. Yet, Ariyakudi always provided aesthetic variance by the timely and proper use of Prati Madhyama Ragas. Renditions by Ariyakudi in Prati Madhyama Ragas such as *Ramanatham* (Pantuvarali) and *Seshachala Nayakam* (Varali) are unforgettable. His wizardry was well-perceived in some concerts, in which he rendered proximate Ragas like *Manirangu* and *Madhyamavati* or *Shankarabharanam* and *Neelambari*, without any apparent aesthetic affliction.

## MANODHARMA IN QUINTESSENCE

I have had the fortune of listening to Ariyakudi render an Alapana of Todi in

four minutes flat, covering all salient and delectable nuances of this Raga. No beaten path or pedestrian presentation please — each Alapana was Manodharma and Kalpana to the maximum. He could present any Raga in its quintessential form in the shortest time-span. *Ranjakatva* was at a premium, in Ariyakudi's presentations. He did however give expansive exposition in *Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi*, thereagain, limiting the duration to desirable levels. Moderation was his hallmark.

Many scholars concede without reservation, that Ariyakudi was the first maestro who was sensitive to audience interest — one who would programme or modify presentations in such a manner to suit and sustain audience interest. The Rasikas were absorbed in his music. He never imposed it on them.

## SYMBOL OF PERFECTION

We cannot overlook his felicity in amplification of the grandeur of small and innocuous compositions by an admixture of Alapana, Neraval, Swaraprasthara and Sangatis. We vividly recall his rendition of *Ninnuvina Sukhamu* in Todi, in this regard. I have a recording of Ariyakudi's rendition of *Sadbhaktiyu Galga* in *Ananda Bhairavi*, where we can perceive his innate genius, in this regard.

Some listeners may recall Ariyakudi's Vilambakala presentations like *Sri Venkatesham* (Todi) or *Sri Subramanyaya* (Khamboji) while others will reminisce Madhyamakala pieces like *Anupama Gunambudhi* (Athana) or *Alakalalla* (Madhyamavati). Kala-Pramana was perfect and Ariyakudi symbolised such perfection. The very fact that Paigat Mani Iyer was his permanent percussio-

nist is adequate enough to substantiate this point. Perfection of laya, to Ariyakudi, was not at the cost of *Ranjakatva*. Seldom did he use outlandish rhythmic patterns which went past the listener.

We also admire his repertoire. Ariyakudi knew thirty compositions in Todi. Todi, perhaps, featured in many concerts — but never the same Kriti. Repetitiveness was eschewed. We have referred to his linkage to the Tyagaraja Shishya-Parampara. He was an ardent Tyagarajaswami devotee — a fact known to those who have seen Ariyakudi at the annual Aradhana. Yet, many rare Dikshitar Kritis were popularised by Ariyakudi. As Dr. V. Raghavan points out, *Hariharaputram* (Vasanta) was popularised by Ariyakudi prior to its perpetual lease to other veterans. I have had the privilege of listening to a tape in the custody of All India Radio, which is a compendium of Ariyakudi's renditions of *Devaranamas* of Purandaradasa. I cannot forget his renditions of *Naa Ninna Dhyana* (Kanada) and *Kaliyugadali* (Jhenjhuti). His wide repertoire remains unmatched.

He had a unique style of rendering some common compositions. I recall the favour done by an afficiando, who played *Tulasidala* (Mayamalava Gowla) by Ariyakudi. This song is associated with the DKP school. Ariyakudi's rendition was unique. Similarly, the serenity of *Sri Ranjani* was seen in his rendition of *Maarubalka*, sans the craze for speed.

Brevity bars further dilation, on the greatness and virtues of Ariyakudi. He had his detractors too. Some criticised inadequacy of *Shruti-Suddha*. Ariyakudi was subjected to malicious campaigns in his prime and twilight years.

Yet, even congenital critics, even self-styled savants of the present period, will certainly agree that Ariyakudi's virtuosity overshadowed his marginal shortcomings. His tradition fortunately continues. Rajam Iyer is a faithful follower, perhaps the most puritan pupil of Ariyakudi, despite his vocal handicaps. K. V. Narayanaswami reveres his Guru, often referring to him as 'Anna', I remember the depth of Ariyakudi Bani in KVN in a rendition at the Dikshitar Bicentenary at Bombay, in Shubapantavarali, with a delectable take-off of Swaras with the sequence 'Ni-Sa-dha-ni-ma-dha-ni'. Yet, KVN, in course of time has developed an indi-

vidualistic style. These disciples of Ariyakudi are Sangita Kalanidhis.

Very few are aware of Ariyakudi as a composer. My first exposure to Ariyakudi's creative abilities was through a rendition of his Tillana in Bilahari *Deem tatara dani*, by D. K. Pattammal. Madurai Krishnan, another disciple, has inherited Ariyakudi's creative talents.

Ariyakudi strode in a majestic manner, the Karnatak Music scenario and has indeed, left his imprints in the sands of time. He was a soft colossus, whose memory many of us will cherish forever.

### "GREATEST SALESMAN"

"Michelangelo's remark that 'no man or woman is born into this world whose work is not born with him', is never more true than in the case of the great ... Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar....."

"His music has a special significance to the present generation of musicians because today the cultural current flows not towards the simple, beautiful and lucid, but towards the novel and singular at any price. These days novelty is at a premium, every idiom is personal and the artiste finds it necessary to startle by departing from tradition. This is where the celebration of Ariyakudi's centenary acquires a point, a focus, not likely to be disregarded."

"... 'Always functioning within the parameters of tradition, Ramanuja Iyengar was an innovator nevertheless ...' In shrewd Ariyakudi's method 'music had been shaken out of its torpor and revitalised ...'"

"Ariyakudi's music was a gospel of proportion, often lacking in modern singers who seem to be carried away by one or the other aspects."

"Restraint is often mistaken as evidence of lack of depth. The overwhelming success of Ariyakudi's career (an unbroken span of 60 years) disproves that. Restraint implies that the artiste has fought down or subdued all those primitive, extravagant impulses that threaten the chaste integrity of art. To choose is to reject — a painful thing for those who indulge in experiment for its own sake...."

"Rightly does Semmangudi, a great maestro himself, designate Ariyakudi as the 'greatest salesman' for Carnatic music since cutcheri paddhati, now in vogue and so popular, owes its origin to him."

(Extracts from K. S. Mahadevan's article in The Times of India, Bombay)

## THE ORNAMENT OF PANDURANG

By  
Sri C. SUBRAMANIAM  
Governor of Maharashtra

The nation in general and Maharashtra in particular, today celebrates a great event — the 700th year of the composition of *Jnaneshwari*, the celebrated commentary on *Bhagavad Gita*, the song celestial, by Sant Jnaneshwara.

### PERENNIAL LUSTRE

This great work is acclaimed as the first and the greatest philosophical and literary work in Marathi language. Jnaneshwara conceived it as an ornament to Pandurang Vittala, the Lord of Pandharpur, in Marathi language. Its lustre has remained undimmed by the passage of seven centuries. And I have no doubt, it will remain so as long as the vibrant, mellifluous Marathi language lives. And it will live for ever.

There is another significant name for Jnaneshwar's commentary on the *Gita* — *Bhavartha Deepika*. *Deepika* means torch and *Bhavartha* means philosophical import. The compassionate, divinely inspired Jnaneshwara, by means of his popular commentary, gave to the people in their own mother-tongue the life-giving light of the *Gita* to guide them aright amidst the dark alleys of life, finally taking them to the summit of Jnana.

Even today there are in Maharashtra many who know by heart all the 9000 Ovis or stanzas of *Jnaneshwari*, a peerless work which elucidates the meaning of the *Gita* of 700 terse Sanskrit verses and the subject of a great many com-

mentaries beginning with the first known commentary of *Bhagavadpada Adi Shankaracharya*.

### THE DIVINE INTEGRATOR

Philosophy by its very nature is abstract. The challenge before Jnaneshwara was to make the abstract concrete, concrete not merely for the learned but also for the common folk living their work-a-day lives. Jnaneshwara was a democrat in thought, word and deed. He was and is a divine integrator.

Jnaneshwara, the poet and philosopher, has wrought a miracle by making the *Gita* delectable to the common people of Maharashtra. His secret lies in spreading a great feast of easily digestible similes before the people hungry for imbibing the *Gitamrita*.

Let us hear Jnaneshwara explaining the abstract quality of *Adambhitva* (absence of pride) which occurs in the 13th chapter of the *Gita*, the chapter on *Jnanayoga* :

"Just as a miser will never spontaneously, even if threatened with death, show his hoard, so even in deadly peril, a man endowed with the quality of *Adambhitva* would never disclose any good act done by him."

"Like a vicious cow holding back the flow of milk, or a rich traveller concealing his wealth when travelling through a wild country, like the daughter of a good family ever watchful to cover her limbs, like a farmer covering the newly sown seed with earth, he conceals any charitable act done by him."



And Jnaneshwara while describing a Jnani, says :

"Though the plantain tree appears light and hollow, it gives plenty of satisfying fruit. The cloud may appear insignificant, as though the wind would waft it away, but it gives continuous and abundant rain. Similarly, the man who has acquired the wisdom of the Self, while he may appear to be poor and shabby externally, is full of merit and fills the heart with joy

(Translation : Shri Manu Subedar).

Jnaneshwara says in the course of his work that his mission is to spread among the people *spiritual bliss*, awaken them to the need for exercising *viveka* or discrimination and to bring *Divine Knowledge* within the reach of all.

#### DEMOCRATIC MYSTICISM

Long before political democracy became a reality in our land, Jnaneshwara had given the lead to usher in what has been hailed as *democratic mysticism*. He is acclaimed as the one who laid the foundation of the *Bhagawat Sampradaya* in Maharashtra. Bahini Bai, the celebrated disciple of Tukaram, describes him as the one who laid the foundation and built the *Mansion of Bhakti*, with other saints contributing to enrich this temple in every way.

Maharashtra which may be described as the *heartland* and *akshayapatra* — inexhaustible reservoir — of *democratic mysticism* has been blessed with a grand galaxy of saints and sages of the highest order belonging to all castes and callings, demonstrating again and again that devotees of God belong to one family and speak one language and

that all quarrels in the name of caste and religion arise out of ignorance. Thus we have in Maharashtra, Gora the potter, Chokhamela the untouchable, Sena the barber, Narahari the goldsmith, Tukaram the trader, Sawata the gardener. Janabai, the servant maid, Kanhopatra the dancing girl, commanding the same reverence as Eknath and Samarth Ramdas who were Brahmins by birth.

It is these saints who nurtured the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra, cutting across all caste distinctions, and one of the most demonstrable living expressions of which is the Warkari procession starting from the Samadhi site of Jnaneshwara in Alandi, 20 km. from Pune, and from Dehu, the birthplace of Sant Tukaram, finally converging at Pandharpur, the citadel of *Bhakti*.

From Alandi, the placid village on the banks of the sacred Indrayani, Jnaneshwara's *Padukas* are taken in procession in a Pallaki, palanquin, to Pandharpur every year on the eighth day of the second fortnight of *Jyeshtha* (June) with lakhs of Warkaris walking a distance of some 250 km. chanting the names of Vittala and singing *Abhangs* composed by the saints of Maharashtra.

This year on the 17th of June I had the privilege of receiving the Jnaneshwara *Paduka* at Pune on its way to Pandharpur.

This great event is a re-affirmation of the cultural unity of India and the great democratic spirit that permeates our religious firmament, without distinction of caste, creed, region and religion.

Courtesy : *Bhavan's Journal*.

## BEAUTY IN SIMPLICITY

By

Dr. K. J. IYENGAR

A contemporary composer-musician of calibre comparable with Harikesanallur Muthaiah Bhagavatar, Mysore Vasudevachar and Papanasam Sivan was Brahmasri T. R. Vishwanatha Sastrigal of Mayuram (1893-1958).



Viswanatha Sastry

His famous *Jayathi Jayathi Bharata Mata* (Khamas), the crowning piece of his *Bharata Bhajanam*, specially composed in commemoration of India's Independence Day, 15th August 1947, became

an instant rage with musicians and rasikas alike. It was popularised by the great GNB who learnt music under Sastrigal, Smt. D. K. Pattammal, Madurai Mani Iyer, T. K. Rangachari, and others. That song was then current coin with Mahakavi Subramania Bharatiar's *Aduvome Palluppadvome* reverberating in every nook and cranny of Tamil Nadu and other places under the sway of Karnatak music. Sastrigal was a nationalist to the core.

#### MULTI-FACETED

He shared with Kamban the sleepy hamlet of Terazhundur near Mayuram as his birth place. He studied in the Kalyanmahal Sanskrit College, Tiruvaiyaru, assiduously learning Sanskrit and Vedantha Sastras.

He also did not neglect his modern English education; he was a popular student of the Municipal High School, Mayuram. He was an adept in extra-curricular activities and took prominent part in the school drama and music competitions and won many an award. His *Tristhayee* mellifluous and Gambhira voice was his impressive asset and it did make its impact on the stage; his musical histrionic talent was soon acclaimed. The legendary S. G. Kittappa euphoria was to flower later.

#### PERFORMING ADEPT

Sastrigal also made rapid strides as a Harikatha Kalakshepa Vidwan with his innovative musical skill and attractive presentation of religious, ethical and philosophical themes and their variations. He was a worthy contemporary of Mangudi Chidambara Bhagavatar, Harikesanallur Muthaiah Bhagavatar, Chidambaram Srirangachar, etc.

Music giants like Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar, Simizhi Sundaram Iyer and Dasavadyam Venkatarama Iyer of Devakottai laid enduring musical foundations earlier in his life to find fruition later.

Sastrigal was an expert Harmonium Vidwan with his nimble fingers dancing all over that much-maligned instrument weaving patterns of melodious music. It is a tribute to his mastery over Harmonium that his full-length recitals

found veterans like Malakkottai Govindaswami Pillai and Semmangudi Narayanaswami Iyer as accompanists. He also gave vocal performances with eminent accompanists.

Even in his teens he showed extraordinary talents as a Vaggeyakara (composer). *Vallimanprava* in Tamil is a standing testimony to his precocity. He was equally at ease with his Sanskrit compositions. It is noteworthy that he won the first prize of the Music Academy in 1931 for his Sanskrit piece *Kamitee*.

#### KRITI OF 'KURAL'

He was an avid student of that incomparable Tamil classic *Kural* and became a staunch admirer of Saint Tiruvalluvar. He applied his musical prodigy to the Arattuppal and with his magic wand those inimitable couplets with Parimelazhacar's pithy commentaries woven into them began throbbing into the classical mould of Kritis with Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanams in alluring Ragas, enriched by apt Chittaswaras as needed. His laudable aim was to make earnest students of *Kural* to thoroughly absorb those gems of ethics and morality to shape our daily conduct. Realising the importance of Sastrigal's endeavour, the All India Radio broadcast his *Kural* Kritis by the eminents like D. K. P., M. M. Dandapani Desikar, S. Rajam and others who learnt them direct from Sastrigal.

He was no less an ardent devotee of Muruga and was most prolific in his compositions on Muruga Bhakti embellished by Bhava Suddha music. His *Murugan Madhura Keerthanai* was a best seller of its time.

He was on the Advisory Committee of the Annamalai University and some of his compositions appeared in their journals.

#### A RARE SOUL

Mayuram Vishwanatha Sastrigal was a versatile genius, many-pronged and multi-faceted, operating simultaneously on various fields of endeavour in the cultural world of Karnatak Music : a Sanskrit, Tamil and Vedantha scholar of mark, a musician endowed with an excellent voice of range and power, a no mean stage artiste, a Harikatha exponent of merit, a Harmonium Vidwan of eminence, a prodigious composer of lyrics with delectable Varnamettus bringing out the Raga Lakshanas, a devout Muruga Bhakta, a Tiruvalluvar devotee, a nationalist to his finger tips and, this above all, a simple soul untainted by the lure of pelf or pomp — a rare human amalgam indeed.

His 93rd Jayanthi was celebrated with much aplomb in Madras from 19th to 22nd November, 1986 which this writer attended and enjoyed. Of course, we had to shuttle between the two venues far removed from each other — the Krishna Gana Sabha, T. Nagar and the Srinivasa Sastri Hall, Mylapore. There was a sumptuous feast of lectures, demonstrations and music recitals exclusively of Sastrigal's compositions.

The distinguished participants were Dr. Padma Subramaniam, Sri T. S. Parthasarathy of the Music Academy, Sri V. S. Raghavan of the Tamil Nadu Iyal, Isai, Nataka Manram, Sri V. Balakrishnan of Natyodaya, Madras, the late Dr. S. Ramanathan, Manakkal Rangarajan, Cuddalore Subramaniam, Violinist M. Chandrasekaran, Vairamangalam Lak-

shminarayanan, Tanjore Upendran, S. Rajam (A.I.R., Madras), Tiruvengadu Jayaraman, Parur M. S. Anantharaman, etc.

In conclusion, I would appeal earnestly to the music fraternity, musicians, rasikas, Sabhas, music colleges, schools and institutions, State and Central Governments and their cultural outfits, A.I.R., etc., not to lose sight of his fast approaching Centenary in 1992. We should plan ahead how best to salute this simple but great composer-musician on his Centenary in a manner

that will inspire one and all to follow his footsteps in music, culture and, most important, his life of beauty in simplicity. That indeed was the hallmark of the noble Brahmasri T. R. Vishwanatha Sastrigal of Mayuram.

Beauty in simplicity is also the essence of Saint Tyagaraja. Beauty in simplicity — how hard to meet with in the contemporary artistic world! It is worthwhile for us to make an effort as did the great Sastrigal of Mayuram in recent times.



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## FATHER OF TAMIL MUSIC RENAISSANCE—II\*

By

N. RAJAGOPALAN, I.A.S. (Retd.)

As Gopala Krishna Bharati's ideal of establishing that true devotion is beyond the barriers of caste and creed has been realised in the recent past, the emotional appeal, the social relevance and the spiritual message might have lost relevance. But the beauty of conception, the depth of its penetrating message and the enormity of its popularity remain supreme. Anyone desiring to see Gopala Krishna Bharati in his creation needs just to attend a Bharata Natya recital by a competent artiste portraying Nandanar, (let us desist from the use of 'Tirunalai Povar' since it would militate against the message of Bharati) with his song *Varugalamo* ? (May I come). The connoisseur will come out of the hall his heart soaked in an Ocean of Grace, Humanity, Courtesy, Felicity, Dignity and all that virtuous good conduct stands for. I shall quote the great litterateur, G. Vanmikinathan :

### HAUNTING MELODY

"*Varugalamo* ? This one word of five letters in Tamil contains in it all the pathos, all the accumulated recollections of insult, of rejection, of derision or denial ..... is a haunting phrase which must move the most hardened heart of the so-called superior castes."

And when G. Vanmikinathan, known for his learned researches, says,

that is truth. *Nandanar Charitram* has made Nandanar a 'Symbol of Culture and Civilised Conduct' besides being a 'Man of Spiritual Attainments' and Bharati a 'Poet of Sublime Refinement'. "Nandanar charitram was the parable of Bharati's own soul, intensely felt and imperishably expressed" (K. V. Ramachandran). Bharati saw in Nandanar an epitome of social wrongs and his own pangs and sufferings. Probably he felt too that he was but an yet another edition of that saint.

### WARP & WOOF OF STYLE

The prose part of his life could wait a little more. The nobler elements of air and fire in Bharati make us to linger on. The ugly oyster contains the best of pearls. Even so, the poor, unattractive poet had shown that he was a gem of the purest ray serene commanding the respect of intellectuals, musicians, music-lovers, social reformers and the silent millions. His grip on diction, dialogue and songs is brisk, waggish, dynamic, poignant, appealing and captivating as occasion demands, pouring forth creative originality, clarity and incisiveness. The artiste in him understood 'life in its heights and depths, put his aesthetic reactions and impulses and the whole of himself into his creations' to adopt the words of Neville

\*Excerpt from the book *A Garland or A Biographical Dictionary of Carnatic Composers & Musicians* by N. Rajagopalan, IAS (Retd.), available with "Carnatic Classics" 3, 24th Cross St., Indira Nagar, Madras-600 020. Part-I appeared in SHANMUKHA of April, 1990.

Cardus. Bharati resorted to rare Ragas too like : Natakapriya in *Sivalogamengira*, Sarasangi in *Mahadeva Saranam*, Ahiri in *Ambalavananai*, Jaganmohini in *Sivakamasundari* and Manji in *Sanjalapada Vendam*.

His signature is 'Gopalakrishna' or 'Balakrishna'. His Viduthi Kirthanas are without signature. The number of songs in his operas is four hundred and twenty. Seesiah is the distinguished Frenchman who published *Nandanar Charitram* in 1861. *Karaikal Ammayar*, *Eyer Pahai Nayanar* and *Thiruneelakantha Nayanar* are his other operas. Prof. P. Sambamurthi writes :

"Bharati's genius as a playwright, his capacity for effective characterisation and motivation plots, his skill in introducing fictitious characters and incidents, his sense of humour, his dramatic instinct and insight into human relations, his gift for melody making, his poetic skill, his feelings for raga and rasa ..... are all seen in his opera".

If Tyagaraja's adoration was of Rama, Bharati's idol was Nataraja, the Celestial Origin of Bharatanatyam. Nataraja was the warp and woof of his precarious but notable existence. R. Tirumalai beautifully sums up thus :

"Bharati's style adopted simple, spoken Tamil and where appropriate, the slang and idiom of the character whose sentiments the songs expressed. His command of Tamil was as facile as his musical form. His time-setting was moving. Here the form and content matched, merged and consummated."

It is singular that the Bharati of Ettayapuram had the same revulsion to social iniquities as the Bharati of Narimanam. The Bharatis were blessed with

the concern for the down-trodden and weak. Their appreciation of spiritualism is robust. Both dedicated their lives to the Country and were social revolutionaries.

Bharati's versatility was multi-sided. Inspired after his meeting Tyagaraja at Tiruvaiyaru by his Pancharatna Kirtanas, the gentle colossus composed his own. The emotional and spiritual wealth of his songs *Tiruvadi Charanam* (Kamboji), *Nadanamadinar* (Vasanta) *Pirava Varam Tharum* and other pieces have delighted millions through decades. *Eppo Varuvaro* (Khamas), *Nadanamadinar* (Vasanta) etc., have been favourites with dancers. The felicity of composition like Tyagaraja's can be seen in his songs. Once he enquires the Lord the reasons for his poor health, *Deham ippadiyumakku ilaika vendiyadenna ?* Each of his songs would seem to echo Voltaire, when he said, "I express myself clearly enough. I am like the little brooks which are transparent".

## CHILDHOOD

Now from poetry to the prose part of his life. There are differing versions about the place and year of his birth. 1811 and 1810 are both mentioned. Mudicondan is also mentioned as the place of his birth. Sangita Kalanidhi Mudicondan Venkatarama Ayyar mentions Narimanam and he should be correct. Bharati spent the early part of his life at Mudicondan. Likewise, the year of his death is given as 1881 and 1896. 1811 and 1881 are taken as they have been assumed generally. Bharati was the son of Sivarama Bharati, grandson of Ramaswami Bharati and great grandson of Kothanda Bharati — all scholars in Sanskrit and Veena players.

Poverty was probably the ancestral asset in the family with rights of heredity, heritability and inalienability !

Young Gopala Krishna, in different spells, learnt Kavya, Nataka and Alan-kara under Dikshappayyanathan Ayyar of Mudicondan, Tamil under Chokka Pillai of the same village, Philosophy and religion under Govinda Sivan of Mayuram and Hindustani music under Tiruvidaimarudur Ramdas. He learnt some songs from Ghanam Krishna Ayyar. Probably he had learnt music from different sources.

Born poor and having lost his parents while young, Bharati worked as a cook in a temple at Koothanur near Mudicondan. Probably the tender innocent heart, rich and vibrant with the nucleus of the intense emotions that were to gush forth in later years and the thoughtful mind, that was to shape a renaissance and revolution in later years, stared at the deities day by day, week after week, with the cooked food (Prasada) in hand — conscious of the physical deformities inflicted by a harsh fate, but oblivious of the potential for future attainments and unconscious of the immortal legacy they were to present — ignorant of what to pray for through the pair of tearful eyes !

## VARAKAVI

Koothanur has the unique temple for the Goddess of Learning Saraswathi. Who knows, she had blessed young Bharati even as She did Kalidasa ! Bharati was a bachelor and a Brahmachari. He had a poor personality. Dr. U. Ve. Swaminatha Ayyar, Father of Tamil Research and a disciple of Bharati for sometime, gives this account :

"Broad feet; Wasted legs; Swollen knees; Broad waist. A cloth above his knees; Hunch-back; Short neck. Double chin; Cat's eyes; Narrow elongated head. Alopecia; a few hairs like cane flower. A single bead in neck ....."

"I expected to see in Bharati a very beautiful person but it was otherwise. After all, the sweetest melody emanates from the Veena which has curves (bends). What is there if there are so many bends in this Veena of human frame created by God's Will ?"

## UGLY DUCKLING ?

Bharati was a Varakavi and Asukavi. But his deformities robbed him much of what was due to him while alive. He suffered ridicule and indignity. Ridicule is the first dividend of a genius. Philosopher Schopenhauer lived alone with no comrade but a dog, which he called quite strangely 'Atma' but the wags of the town called it "Young Schopenhauer". Even so people gave to Bharati the envious title of — 'Koonaa, Kuruha! Durguna, asooya, ahankara Gopala Krishna Bharati'.

Was Voltaire beautiful ? No. Socrates ? No, his was "rather the head of a porter than that of the most famous of philosophers. But if we look again, we see something of that human kindness and unassuming simplicity which made this homely thinker a teacher beloved of the finest youths in Athens !" (Will Durant). Even so, shorn of contemporary criticism, people saw nothing but the splendour of Bharati's opera, the fragrance of his crusading spirit and the solicitude for truth and excellence.



A local poet spread canards but the great man bore them all as "Patience sitting in monument smiling in grief." Kandappa Chettiar of Nagapattinam encouraged him to write the opera and got it released in his place. Conscious of threats to the acceptance of his opera, Bharati wanted to clothe it with the seal of approval of the Tamil scholar, Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Tiruvaduthurai. The approval came only after Pillai happened to hear by chance Bharati sing it with emotion and fervour. Pillai gave his appreciation and expressed his regrets for delay too.

#### PHYSICAL FRAME & EMINENCE

His poor personality compromised his position and status. Thus when he met Tyagaraja, the latter was aware of his merits but could not take him for Bharati and so asked him whether he knew Bharati. The saint was thrilled to know that the inelegant frame before him was none but the great man he had heard of. The disciples were then singing *Sri Rama Sita Alankara Swaroopa* in Abhogi raga. A casual query of the saint whether he had composed any in that raga brought forth the song *Sabhapathikku veru Deivam*, on the next day fresh with the fragrance of its overnight composition and the elegance in the use of the raga.

The District Munsif and Poet, Vedanayakam Pillai, was a great admirer of Bharati. He arranged for a musical discourse on *Nandanar Charitram* by the Tanjavur Krishna Bhagavathar (1847-1903). The discourse was grand and the artiste made copious references to

the eminence of Bharati — totally unaware of his presence before him. Vedanayakam Pillai who had invited Bharati regretted his failure to introduce him earlier and the Bhagavathar, on knowing the fact, apologised for his



GOPALA KRISHNA BHARATI

lapse. Even eminence requires a decent frame to make it presentable!

Apart from the scholar-Munsif, Ananta Bharati (1845-1905) who has authored *Bhagavatha Dasama Skanda Kirthanas* was a good friend, while Mayavaram (Anandatandavapuram) Krishnananda Yogi helped Bharati in writing his songs. Bharati spent much of his time on the pial of the house of his poor disciple, Ramaswami Ayyar. His other disciples included, Ponnuswami Dikshitar and Ra-

jarethina Dikshitar of Chidambaram, Natesa Ayyar and Subramanya Ayyar of Mayavaram (now Mayiladuthurai).

The venerable Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U. Ve. Swaminatha Ayyar started his music tuition in spite of Bharati's warning that his Tamil tutor, Meenakshisundaram Pillai, "is an enemy of music and would not allow you". The surreptitious music course ended when the Tamil scholar came to know and told U. Ve. Saa., "Either Tamil or music and not both".

#### SAINT BUT NOT SANYASI

Gopala Krishna Bharati loved goodness and good people. When Vedanayakam Pillai did sincere drought relief work, Bharati called him 'Purushottama' — noblest of men. The celebrated Maha Vaidyanatha Ayyar during his visits would stay with Bharati, as a mark of respect. Bharati was a saint without being a sanyasi (renunciation). He had few wants. His spartan living made him independent of others. Later days, he collected Rs. 60 for a concert, left the amount with his hosts, kept care-

ful account of money left with each and issuing handnotes (cheques) on palm leaves authorising payment to those in need. He accumulated a sum of Rs. 3,000 and left it for charities at the temples at Mayavaram and Chidambaram. The charities so nobly started by the saint are not kept up now. Incidentally, charities do meet such a fate owing to the lapse of time and there is no mechanism to ensure against. The author has moved the Government of a memorial slab at the house Bharati lived at Mayiladuthurai.

Born poor but rich in musical and poetical attainments, ungainly in personality but well accomplished intellectually, Bharati rose from dust against overwhelming odds by sheer devotion, dedication and self-control and has left a rich legacy that is unparalleled. Truly, he is the 'Father of Tamil Music Renaissance and Modern Tamil Opera'. Quite appropriately, he passed away on the day of Lord Shiva — Sivarathri

(Concluded)

#### Errata

In Part-I of the article published in SHANMUKHA, April 1990, Page 12, Col. 1, line 12 : For the words "that only the quality," read "that not only the quality". Page 15, Col. 2, line 27, for the words "and later by", read "and earlier by".



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## CARRYING MESSAGE OF BHAKTI

By LAKSHMI KUMAR

The era of the Trinity of Karnatak Music heralded the Golden Dawn of the renaissance of Karnatak Music. Purandaradasa preceded them by three centuries. Purandaradasa, born in a village called Purandaragarh, more authentically near Tirthahalli rather than a name-sake-village near Poona, was a wide-travelled saint-composer. His compositions indicate the extent of his travels. *Muyyakke Muyyi Teerittw* relates to Pandharpur. Other examples are *Palisamma* (Sringeri), *Kande Karunamidhiye* (Hampi), *Kandu Kandu* (Kondanur), *Narasimha Paliso* (Toravi in Bijapur District), *Kandena Govindana* (Belur), *Jagadodharana* (Mallur) *Tirupati Venkataramana* (Tirupati), *Ghatika-chaladi* (Sholinghur), *Simharoopa* (Namakkal), *Chandrachooda* (Kumbakonam) etc.

### TYAGARAJA'S ITINERARY

This article seeks to review the role of the Trinity as travellers. There are groups of five songs, composed by Tyagarajaswami, called Pancharatnas — which relate to places of pilgrimage, visited by him. We have the *Lalgudi Pancharatna*, the *Kovur Pancharatna*, the *Adipuri (Tiruvottiyur) Pancharatna* and the *Sri-Rangam Pancharatna*. Kovur, the home-town of Sundaresa Mudaliar, is just west of Madras. Some scholars are of the view that *Endaro Mahanubhavulu* was composed during the saint's sojourn at Bunder Street in Madras. An incomplete composition *Sari Vedalina*, where the Charanapassage is lost, is indicative of a visit to

the Parthasarathi temple at Triplicane. Tiruvottiyur or Adipuri is a suburb of Madras — where Tyagarajaswami's favourite disciple, Veena Kuppaier, lived. Tyagarajaswami's output when at Tiruvottiyur was prodigious. Famous compositions relating to this place are *Sundari Nee Divya*, (Kalyani), *Sundari Nannindarilo* (Begada) and *Dharini Telusukonti* (Suddha Saveri). Tyagaiyer's visit to Tirupati is confirmed by two well-known compositions — *Terateeyaga rada* (Gowlipantu) and *Venkatesha Ninu* (Madhyamavati). The compositions *Varada Nava-neetaasha* (Ragapanjara) and *Varadaraja Ninne Kori* (Swarabooshani) are indicative of his visit to the Varadaraja temple at Kanchipuram, though the word 'Kanchi' does not find a place in these compositions.

Tyagaraja composed two songs dedicated to Divinities at Brahmapuri (Sir-kazhi). Tyagarajaswami was born and lived the best part of his life in Chola-Desha. Kovur Sundaresa and Kuppaier had to virtually plead with Tyagaier to visit their home-towns. Ayyarval's travels were limited to Tanjore, Trichy, Chingelput Districts — extending upto Tirupati as the northern limit. Essentially, an itinerary extending only to Chola and Pallava Deshas.

As regards Syama Shastri, it is not clear whether he visited Kanchipuram. The idol of Bangaru-Kamakshi arrived at Tanjore from Udyarpalayam and was installed with pomp and pageantry. Feelings were running high, relations were not cordial, on this score, between

residents of Kanchipuram and Tanjavur. Yet, we find innumerable references to Kanchi, in his compositions. Perhaps, it is not erroneous to construe that Syama Shastri did visit Kanchi, some time. Syama Shastri dedicated several compositions to Brihadamba of Pudukkottai. We find some compositions relating to Jambukeswara (Tiruvannaikkovil) and Vaitheeshwaran Kovil. Syama Shastri stayed for a long duration at Madurai, when he composed a series of compositions called *Navaratna-Malika*. Popular compositions like *Saroja Dalanetri* (Shankarabharanam), *Mayamma* (Ahiri) and *Meenalochana* (Dhanyasi) belong to the Navaratna Malika series.

#### THE WIDEST TRAVELLED

Muthuswami Dikshitar was the widest-travelled, amongst the Trinity. Many opine that *Sri Sathyanarayanam* (Shubha Pantuvarali) relates to Badrinath. Dikshitar's sojourn at Varanasi, under the tutelage of Chidambaranatha Yogi, is recorded for posterity. Compositions like *Gange Mam Pahi* (Jhenjhuti), *Vishalakshem* (Kashiramakriya) and *Ehi Annapoorne* (Punnagavarali) most certainly pertain to Kashi and not to Kuzhikkara. Linguistic chauvinism, of very recent origin, seeks to prove that Dikshitar did not visit Tirupati. This postulation is difficult to accept, knowing fully well that Dikshitar had stayed at Manali and at Tiruttani — both places being in the proximity of Tirupati. An examination of the Sahitya of compositions like *Seshachala* (Varali) and *Shankha Chakra* (Poornachandrika) will throw up adequate proof to substantiate Dikshitar's visit to Tirupati. The song *Sri Parthasarathina* (Shuddha Dhanyasi) is ascribed to Triplicane. His pilgrimage traversed the entire length of the Kaveri — from Kodumudi to Tiruvengadu near Poompuhar.

A little appreciated fact is that we have a *Sri Rangam Pancharatnam* composed by Dikshitar too, the compositions being *Ranganayakam* (Nayaki), *Ranganathaya* (Dhanyasi), *Sri Bhargavi* (Mangala Kaisiki), *Sri Ranganatham* (Poornachandrika) and *Rangapura Vihara* (Brindavana Saranga).

It will be too onerous to detail the places in Chola-Desha, in whose praise Dikshitar composed kritis. Mention, however, should be made of Tiruvarur, where every Sannidhanam was offered a composition and of Mayuram — the abode of a Navavarna series. Dikshitar's dozen on Madurai and suburbs can be pondered about. We find that Dikshitar had visited Kazhugumalai — *Subhramanyena* (Suddha Dhanyasi), Tirunelveli — *Sri Kantimatim* (Hemavati) and *Saleevateeshvaram* (Devagandhari), Tiruppullani in Ramnad — *Sri Ramam* (Narayana Gowla), Rameshwaram — *Ramanatham* (Pantuvarali) and *Parvatha Vardhini* (Sama) and Kallidai-kurichi — *Sri Lakshmi Varaham* (Abhogi). Amongst the Trinity, it was only Dikshitar who visited Kerala, where he composed *Rakta Ganapatim* (Mohanam) and *Hariharaputram* (Vasanta).

What significance does this travelogue have? With vastly improved communications nowadays, we still find travel an ordeal. Just imagine the plight faced by Dikshitar and Purandaradasa — who travelled far and wide. These saints and scholars carried their message of Bhakti to far-flung places, in days bygone, at great risk and cost. How many of us have such a missionary zeal, have a spirit of adventure! We talk of national integration — do we do anything constructive to propagate it, like the Haridasas and the Trinity?

## AN EMINENT SAHITYAKARTA

By

Dr. K. L. RAMAN

**K**arnatak music can undoubtedly proclaim to have a vast and rich repertoire of priceless musical compositions bequeathed to the music world by a galaxy of illustrious composers and Sahityakartas beginning from the Music Trinity, Saint Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Shyama Sastri and a score of other celebrated vaggeyakaras. Among the modern contemporary music composers, Dr. Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar of Chidambaram, a name to conjure with, occupies an exalted place in the realm of Karnatak music. He is not only a reputed Sahityakarta but also an acknowledged authority in the theory and practice of Karnatak music. He stands unique in view of the sublimity and the high quality of his innumerable kritis.

Chidambaram, the abode of the cosmic dancer Lord Nataraja, has produced illustrious scholars, dancers, musicians, saints, philosophers, educationists and several artistes in various performing arts. Notable among them is Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar.

Dikshitar of Chidambaram enjoy a coveted place in Chidambaram inasmuch as they are the only privileged class of the society from time immemorial to be the hereditary priests of Nataraja temple in Chidambaram, a very famous shrine of the South and the most powerful and popular deity of the Saivites.

Born on September 21, 1921, the eldest in a family of four, Dikshitar has been fathering not only his only son Sankara Nataraja Dikshitar but also his two brothers and their family members. He spared no time nor money to educate them both academically, in religious observances and Vedic worship.

Though he was deprived of any formal education, he learnt Sanskrit and Tamil from eminent scholars and pundits. He was born in Chidambaram and his parents Vaidyalinga Dikshitar and Ganga Bageerathi Ammal, though not economically well placed in life, spotted abnormal talents and traits in his boyhood days, something unique and rare among the boys of his age. Even as a child, he exhibited his boundless bhakti and deep devotion to Lord Nataraja and evinced great and keen interest in mastering Sanskrit so that he could delve deep into the priceless books in Vedic literature and Hindu philosophy.

Wonderstruck by the exuberant and precocious nature of the child, his parents put him under the tutelage of eminent scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Dandapaniswami Dikshitar, Chellappa Dikshitar, Pandhitharaja Somasekara Dikshitar, Ananthathandava Dikshitar, Mahadeva Sastrigal, Subramania Ganapadigal for learning Sanskrit, Tamil, Vedic literature, Sastras, etc. Simultaneously, he was placed under Pataga Sundaram Pillai, an eminent Karnatak musician and father of Kalaimamani Chidambaram S. Jayaraman, to study

the nuances of Karnatak music. Within a short span of time, Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar, by dint of his perseverance and deep involvement, had attained mastery in all the above subjects and began to compose musical compositions in Sanskrit and Tamil.

#### HOMELY, CHARMING KRITIS

He is a musical genius and a creative artiste and a Sastric exponent. He humbly claims that he has composed more than 2,000 compositions which include Kirtanas of high classical value. His Kritis abound in religious fervour and advice to humanity. A musical composition can be aptly compared to a manufactured article, executed with artistic finish. It has a concrete melodic form and is practised hundreds of times before it is rendered in a concert. This accounts for its sparkling excellence. The aesthetic pleasure that one derives by listening to a beautiful, Kritis is boundless and immeasurable. When Dr. Dikshitar composes a new piece, he is also creating music of the highest order and he releases them to those who only voluntarily approach him for his compositions, if he is personally satisfied with the recipients. He does not give them for money. He is very staunch in this respect.

Like distinctive styles in prose and poetry, there are distinctive styles in the musical writings of great composers. The poet uses the spoken word as the medium for the expression of the thoughts in his language of the pure sound. The idea in almost all the compositions is to evoke the feeling of devotion or anyone of Navarasas. The music is in consonance with the Sahitya or Kritis and both together combine to produce the intended or desired rasa. The Kritis

is the most highly evolved among musical forms. The ideal kept in mind by a composer while composing a Kritis is the portrayal of raga bhava in all its rich and splendid colours. The presence of fine poetic and sublime ideas in Kritis of the Music Trinity and a score of other later composers despite the passage of long time and period still stand as unique and unsurpassed.

Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar's style is simple, homely, beautiful and charming. It requires a genius to write in simple style. His compositions are so easy and simple that even the layman could understand their meanings and messages conveyed in them. His idea and object to couch all his compositions in very ordinary and simple style is to make the humanity at large to understand and assimilate them. Anyone can become a lyricist; but all cannot become Sahityakarta. A Sahityakarta should definitely possess knowledge of music in the purest form. The haunting beauty of his melodies is in no small extent due to their refreshing and flowing style.

Contemporary composers have enriched Karnatak music. Late Prof. Sambamoorthy in his book *South Indian Music* — Book No. 4 has mentioned the name of Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar in the list of modern contemporary music composers. He has also further mentioned that some of his compositions are in rare Talas. Moreover, his lyrics overflow with religious depth and devotion. His compositions reveal the creative propensity and his boundless love and deep bhakti to Lord Nataraja. Many of his compositions and kritis dwell on the celestial beauty of the Anantha Thandavam of Lord Thillai Sabesan.

His "Navagraha Keerthanam" in Sanskrit in nine different Ragas has earned the praise of the giant music Vidwan Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasier. After hearing the Navagraha Kirtanas sung by his disciple Smt. Rukmini Venkatachalam in the public concert at Sastri Hall in Madras, which was presided over by him, Semmangudi appreciated Dr. Dikshitar for composing these Kirtanas and admitted him as "Vaggeyakarar". Shri K. S. Mahadevan, an eminent music critic while reviewing the kritis of Dikshitar sung in the above concert in *The Indian Express* (Madras, of 11.12.1987) had rated him as one of the composers of quality kritis and also mentioned that he became a Vaggeyakarar even before he turned thirty.

#### APPEAL TO SOUL

His devotion to Lord Nataraja is inestimable. More appealing to one's soul rather than to one's connoisseurship are his Sanskrit kritis which are ennobling and seem to raise one to transcendental heights especially when sung by the composer-singer himself. In short, his compositions are unique in being original, full of compassion and inspiring one to heights of religious anubhavas.

Only a few classical Karnatak musicians like Sangita Kalanidhi K. V. Narayanaswami, Chidambaram S. Jayaraman, Manakkal Rangarajan, T. M. Soundararajan, Seerkazhi S. Govindarajan, M. S. Gopalakrishnan, M. S. Anantharaman and Smt. Rukmani Venkatachalam and a few others could sing his compositions set in rare Ragas and Talas with ease and great felicity.

Dikshitar was barely thirty when he composed a sequence of nine Kritis in

nine different Ragas set to nine different Talas under the title *Sri Sankara Navagraha Tala Keerthanavali*. The work is in praise of Adi Sankaracharya. These kritis were appreciated by veterans like Sangita Kalanidhi Chembai Vaidyanatha Baghavathar and Veena maestro Karaikudi Sambasiva Ayyar and others. It comprises Melakarta and Rakthi Ragas and rare Talas like Tisra Matya, Tisra Jampa, Chatusra Dhruva and Khanda Misra Chapu (a combination of Khanda Chapu and Misra Chapu). The Keerthanavali, rendered by the composer himself before such music stalwarts like Chembai, Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer and His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswathi Paramachariar of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, brought Dikshitar into limelight and quick recognition. The Samaskrita Samithi in Ayodhya in U.P., conferred on him the title of "Sahitya Bhushanam" in 1952, the year in which the book was published.

#### AWARDS

Some of the Dikshitar's compositions have been recorded and released. A Kritis in Vasantha Bhairavi *Neeye Gathi Dayapari* sung by Chidambaram Jayaraman and released as a disc in 1944 became popular. The State award of Kalaimamani was conferred on him by the Tamil Nadu Sangeetha Nataka Akademi in 1973. The prestigious award of Fellowship by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi was conferred on him in 1986. In 1987 Tiruchi Sanskrit University conferred on him D. Litt. In 1984, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness Sri Jayendra Saraswathi of Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt, the Acharya recognised him as an eminent Sahityakarta of outstanding merit by presenting him a gold medal and a silk brocade shawl.



In his composer manifestation, Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar has been a Vice President of the Chidambaram Sathguru Sangeetha Samajam for nearly a decade; a member of the Music Audition Committee of A.I.R. Pondicherry; a member of the panel constituted by the Tamil Nadu Government to select talented young musicians for promotion; an honorary member of the Experts' Committee of the Music Academy of Madras for more than three decades; one of the Judges for evaluating participants in music competitions conducted by the Indian Fine Arts Society, besides being Judge for various music competitions organised by music Sabhas, etc.

It is surprising to note that such a musical genius has not been so far considered for the title of Sangita Kalanidhi by the Music Academy or Kalasikhamani by the Indian Fine Arts Society, Madras, or Isai Perarignar by the Tamil Isai Sangham, Madras. These awards will only get glittered when they adorn Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar. But he never goes after such awards. It is very surprising to note that his name does not find a place in the Directory of "Who is Who of artistes in Music" published by Sangeet Natak Akademi. (However, his name has been published in the Directory of "Who is Who in India" published by the Business Press, Bombay.)

#### MULTI-FACETED INTELLECT

Such a storehouse of Vedic and Sastric knowledge, he never trumpets about his achievements. Humble and soft spoken, he avoids fanfare and publicity. In looks and appearances, he combines the old brotherhood of priests and music fraternity of today.

Dikshitar, apart from being a musical intellect, is a multifaceted personality. His phenomenal fame as an astute astrologer is widely known. Prominent personalities and commoners come to him with various problems. He offers *pariharams* suited to each individual to mitigate the severity of the problem, for which he does not expect anything in return. By performing and arranging for its performance, they completely feel satisfied and relieved permanently from their miseries. Even people from abroad come to him for relief. Nobody has ever been disappointed and he wishes well for everybody. I have known this from my own personal experience. Also, some of the prominent musicians are in high status today due to his blessings. (I am also personally aware of this.)

He is much respected in the circles of Vedic scholars and heads of various religious Mutts. His memory of events and knowledge of worldly affairs is really remarkable. He has to his credit the rare honour of having done countless "Kumbhabhishekams" and "Samprokshanams" to several temples. He commands the goodwill and appreciation of His Holiness Kanchi Paramacharya and in respect of the construction of temples and installation of deities in them, his vast experience and advice are being sought by the temple builders. He has also given the basic plans (as per Vedic Sastras) and suggestions for construction and installation of the deity for the Nataraja temple that was built recently at Satara near Poona, under the directions given by His Holiness Kanchi Paramacharya through Brahmachari Kannan and Sri Ganapathi Sthapathi. This temple has

been built under his guidance in the same style as the temple at Chidambaram and is called Uttara Chidambaram.

He is a good organiser of any festival or religious conference. In 1954, when the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came to Annamalai University for PEN Conference, he came to Chidambaram temple for darshan of Lord Nataraja. On behalf of Chidambaram Sri Sabanayakar Temple Podu Dikshitars, Dr. Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar presented the Welcome address in Sanskrit and arranged for the darshan of Lord Nataraja.

#### CANDID AND QUEER

Dikshitar who lives in Madras next to my flat, is a very interesting personality.

His open and candid remarks and views about the present day music and its performers are sometimes queer. He feels and openly asserts that the Karnatak Music which was once sublime and noble has now been relegated to the background and it has been too much commercialised. He also feels about the deplorable standards of the present day musicians and opines that the depth and the highly imaginative Manodharma Sangita in the present-day musicians have reduced. The art of music has become cheap and very much diluted in view of the scramble by the performers for more money and material comforts. He strongly feels that the present day standards of music should improve only by the grace of God and passage of time.

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# KANAKADASA'S "RAMADHAANYA CHARITRE"

(A Miniature Epic)

The Kannada poet and a famous composer, Saint Kanakadasa (15th century) was a contemporary of Sri Purandaradasa and both of them are reverentially called "Aswini Devatas"! Both of them were the disciples of Sri Vyasaraya, of Vijayanagar Empire. There were occasions and instances when Sri Kanakadasa was either cajoled or condemned on account of his birth as a 'Kuruba' which was considered to be a low caste.

This must have inspired Kanakadasa to compose a miniature epic ("Khanda Kavya") consisting of 158 stanzas in the "Bhamini-Shatpadi" style (stanzas of 6 lines each)\* depicting that all things on this earth have both good and bad qualities and to give a fitting reply to caste fanatics. Thus flowed from Kanakadasa the famous Kannada work "Ramadhaanya Charitre"!

Ramadhaanya is a well-known food-grain of South India, now called "Ragi", comparable to cardamom in size and colour. "Ragi" is the defaced form of "RAGHAV", the name of Rama himself which, according to Kanakadasa, was conferred on 'Naradalaga' (the original name of Ragi), by Sri Rama himself in recognition of its special qualities as compared to paddy and seven other foodgrains (Navadhaanya).

\*The epic was presented in the form of Gamaka Roopaka early January 1990 at the Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat's 20th Musicians' Conference, Bangalore, commemorating the Saint's 5th birth centenary.

The main theme of the work is a vehement quarrel between Vrihi (Paddy) and Naradalaga (Ragi) as to their good and bad qualities and their usefulness to the human society culminating in the establishment of the superiority of Naradalaga over other foodgrains, in a meeting of all the Heavenly V.I.P.'s convened by Sri Rama Himself! Kanakadasa has very diligently linked this theme with the story of Ramayana and thereby enhanced the poetic value of *Ramadhaanya Charitre*!

The poet says at the commencement of the story that Maharshi Shandilya once came to Yudhishtira who along with his brothers and wife was wandering in the woods, while in exile and narrated to him the '*Ramadhaanya Charitre*, just to console him against the hardships of forest life.

## CONTENT OF THE STORY

The story of Ramayana from the birth of Sri Rama to the death of Ravana runs with the speed of a race horse! Then, the story slows down. After the death of Ravana, while returning from Lanka to Ayodhya, on board the Pushpak along with Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Sugreeva, Vibheeshana and others, Sri Rama alights at the Ashram of Maharshi Goutama. The maharshis there treat-

ed Sri Rama and his companions with many dishes cooked from Navadhaanyas, (namely, Naradalaga, Vrihi, Kambu, Jola, Haraha, Saame, Navane, Baragu and Wheat). The dishes were appreciated by one and all. Sri Rama asked Hanuman as to the taste of the various dishes. Hanuman said that the dishes were very tasty and expressed his desire to see all the foodgrains in their original forms. Maharshi Goutama immediately arranged for the exhibition of the foodgrains in small separate heaps. Sri Rama wanted to know which grain was the best of all the nine. Goutama replied that Naradalaga (Ragi) was the best.

Immediately, Vrihi (Paddy) was enraged and questioned the statement of Goutama and asked him how Naradalaga was superior to him or any other foodgrain like wheat. But he did not wait for the reply or explanation from Goutama. Not only that. So impatient was he that he pounced upon Naradalaga and began to condemn him. Naradalaga also did not lag behind. He too went on condemning Vrihi.

The following arguments and counter-arguments were hurled at each other by Vrihi and Naradalaga:

**Vrihi:** You are a ruffian! low born! Get out of this august presence of Sri Rama.

**Nara:** You are a weak fellow, useless. You serve only the rich and well-to-do persons. Only patients and nursing mothers relish you as a soft diet. You also adorn the mouths of dead bodies! Is it not disgraceful?

**Vrihi:** I am indispensable in all auspicious functions, occasions, feasts, yajnas, royal palaces, and for *navedyam* (off-

erings) to gods during worship. You are unfit for all these purposes.

**Nara:** Damn it! When people die, their sons perform some 'Karmas' during which they will prepare 'pinda' from you and offer it to crows! This is your fame!

**Vrihi:** You don't know. They use me during inauguration of new buildings; for blessing the 'newly weds'; for worshipping all kinds of instruments. They wear me on their foreheads along with sandal paste during holy occasions. When pious brahmins bless others with 'Akshata' made of me, the recipients will gain riches, long life and other pleasures!

**Nara:** Look here. When rains fail and famine sets in who will come to the rescue of people? It is only me and not you and your other grainfellows. I grow well even in rainless seasons and you will be nowhere then! I serve both the rich and the poor alike, while you are partial to the rich only. I am not cruel like you. Get out.

**Vrihi:** Whatever you may say, I am like a sandal stick; you are a dried up twig. I am like cow's milk, you are like sheep's milk. I am like Hanuman, you are like a monkey on the tree. You can never equal me. Get out.

**Nara:** How funny it is! They prepare wet balls made out of your powder, call them by the names of their ancestors and great grandfathers; place you on blades of *darbha* grass and then offer you as food for dumb animals! Such a ridiculous story is yours!

**Vrihi :** You can't understand it. I am like the Ganga river, you are like a canal. I am like Garuda, you are like an eagle. I am like a cuckoo while you are just like a crow. I am like a swan, and you are like a goose!

**Nara :** You are a shameless booster, Vrihi, because you praise yourself without any hesitation. Good people bow their heads with all humbleness when others praise them. (Turning to the audience) O, my dear honourable elders, why do you keep quiet? Please decide who is better. I am fed up arguing with this shameless weakling!

Till then, the august gathering presided by Sri Rama could only be dumb witnesses of the quarrel. Sri Rama was rather embarrassed and dissatisfied at the headlong behaviour of the two *Dhaanyapurushas*. He asked Goutama to give a decision of the dispute. But Goutama replied that neither the maharshis nor the kings assembled there could pass a judgement as to who was the better of the two. Then Sri Rama suggested that he would return to Ayodhya immediately and call for a meeting of all the distinguished gods and goddesses, wherein the dispute of the two *dhanyapurushas* would be heard and judgement passed. He ordered that in the meanwhile the two should be kept in prison pending enquiry and judgement. Accordingly, the two *dhanya purushas* were kept in two underground cells.

After return to Ayodhya and after the coronation ceremony Raja Sri Rama sent Hanuman to bring the two contending parties along with Goutama and other maharshis.

A big meeting was called by Sri Rama in which almost all heavenly dignitaries like Lord Shiva, Brahma, Indra, along with Surya, Chandra, and others were present. Naradalaga and Vrihi were brought and presented before the meet-

ing presided by Sri Rama. Lo! Vrihi was almost half dead as he could not withstand the hardship of underground life for a period of six months, while Naradalaga was quite hale and hearty! Sri Rama asked the gods and others to judge who of the two was better. Observing the condition of the two contenders, Devendra declared that Naradalaga was the better of the two and hence the winner. This was seconded by Maharshis Narada and Kapila, while the whole gathering applauded the decision. Sri Rama was immensely pleased and as a token of his appreciation conferred his own name 'Raghava' upon Naradalaga, ordering for the discontinuation of the old name. All the gods who had assembled bestowed upon 'Raghava' their special powers. Bhavani (Annapoorna) was pleased to order all her female devotees to take birth in the homes of 'Raghava' (Ragi) growers to prepare and serve the families with delicious dishes out of 'Ragi'!

When all were rejoicing, Vrihi was almost weeping on self-remorse. Sri Rama consoled him saying that he (Vrihi) was also indispensable to the human society, and that Naradalaga was honoured only because he could withstand famine conditions and because he treated the rich and the poor alike. He asked Vrihi not to be disheartened or feel humiliated as he would continue to dominate in all ceremonial occasions. Naradalaga also consoled Vrihi and suggested to him to settle in North India where he could thrive well and that he himself (Naradalaga) would settle in South India.

Thus ends the *Ramadhaanya Charitre* after listening to which Yudhishtira expressed his deep gratitude to Maharshi Shandilya.

(Translated from Kannada by  
Malur T. Venkatappa)

## “KAMALALAYA TEERTHA VAIBHAVE.....”

It is April-May, the Tamil month of Chittirai. The quiet town of Tiruvarur, the birth place of the Music Trinity, suddenly comes alive, musically active. It is Mummoorthi Jayanthi Festival time. A festival entrusted to the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha Carnataka Sangeetha Seva Trust by Kanchi Acharya, one that is celebrated annually with a view to “rescuing, renovating, preserving and perpetuating” the Janmabhoomi of these “Saintly Sons.”

It is a historical coincidence that the Music Trinity whose period is hailed as the golden era of Karnatak music were born in Tiruvarur, a citadel of Tamil Culture, “rendered holier by the divine hymns of Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar”, and in the same month (though years apart), one closely following the other — Syama Sastri (1762), Tyagaraja (1767) and Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1776). Their melodies represented three facets of music. Tyagaraja's was ‘Bhakti Yoga’, Dikshitar made it an intellectual pursuit of music and Syama Sastri's was pure and simple with a penchant for lilting rhythm.

No doubt, the towering Gopuram of Lord Tyagesa, and Goddess Kamalamba and the serene Kamalalayam Tank around inspire in you a devotion, an utter surrender to the muse. Instinctively you respond to the music surging in you. “*Kamalalaya Teertha vaibhave Shive*” you hum. The inspiration continues. You don't feel like stopping until you have hummed through the Navavarnas. And you feel happy that the houses of these Saints have been

renovated and maintained with devotion and sanctity.

This year's festival, inaugurated by Shri T. T. Vasu, President, Music Academy, Madras, was very well organised and conducted. As per the annual convention felicitating a veteran musician, this year it was Shri N. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, one of the disciples of Kancheepuram Naina Pillai who received the honour. The function would have acquired a meaning had the stalwart besides the shawl and the purse been allowed a musical session. That the evening sessions were relayed by Akashwani could not stand in the way, as many past their prime and with ‘dissonant’ voice are still going ‘strong’ with the AIR. And Iyengar's voice has not yet lost its power and pitch and he belongs to the tradition where ‘Pataanthara Sudham’ and ‘Uchcharana Sudham’ were maintained with almost religious fervour.

Save this lacuna, the festival moved on a well-oiled machinery, thanks to the remarkable organisational acumen and personal involvement of Lalgudi Jayaraman, the Convenor of the Trust and his band of associates, especially Shri Yagnaraman of Krishna Gana Sabha, Madras, and N. Thyagarajan, a local advocate. Participants, musicians, Rasika-Pilgrims to the Sangeetha Kshetra were well looked after and the Pandal cutcheris well conducted. The audience, a thousand and more listened with rapt attention. It was a rare opportunity for them to listen to a number of luminaries in the course of a week.

The morning session of 'Musical Pransams' at the Vaggeyakaras' respective houses, comprising either group singing or solo concerts lasted an hour each. Evenings too, at the specially erected Pandal at the Municipal School grounds, the sessions where Vidwans and Vidushis performed, were tight time-framed as they were 'Akashwani oriented.'

This year's Jayanthi festival commenced on April 27, Syama Sastri's birthday, at his house. One could never forget the ever-smiling elderly couple who reside and preserve this 'monument', for their hospitality, devotion and dedication. The 'musical pranam' started with Prof. R. Vedavalli's rendition of Sastri's rare gem *Ninnuvina mari galadaa* (Abheri), followed by the three famous Swarajathis, rendered by the students of Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya, Bombay. The air was rent with bhakti as the congregation joined in chorus singing. It was aptly rounded off with the savant's *Marivere Gati evvaramma* (Ananda Bhairavi) led by Lalgudi himself. Accompanists Kanayakumari (Violin) and Srimushnam Raja Rao (Mridangam) lifted it with their inspiring support.

The same group of Shanmukhananda paid their 'anjali' to Dikshitar the following day rendering the Nine Gems of Kamalamba Navavarna with Dhyana and Mangala Kritis at the Dikshitar Mantapam. Charged with devotion and bhava the rendition, as expressed by many rasikas, touched the heart. How 'divine' could the anjali become if the Seva Trust arranged for the various Navavarnas of Dikshitar to be rendered at the sanctum sanctorum. Seldom does one learn them in one row. The tendency is to learn one or two and leave out the rest.

But the grandeur that they exude when learnt in proper perspective and paddhati and rendered with devotion was evident from D. K. Jayaraman's enunciation of the Sankarabharana Navavarna *Sri Kamalambikaya*. His Todi Kriti, *Sri Subrahmanya mam, Rakshatu* was another edifice of divine splendour.

DKJ's disciple Vijaya Siva's Bhairavi Navavarna *Sri Kamalambikayah Param* was neatly tailored to concert requirements.

Among the other recitals presented in the festival the Tyagaraja 'Akandam' — the 24-hour rendition of Tyagaraja Kritis by musicians of Sadguru Sangeetha Samajam of Madras, a dance feature of *Nauka Charitram* by Rhadha and her troupe were noteworthy. Rajkumar Bharati was one of the few who pleasantly surprised the Rasikas with his top class music. Quite a number of veterans filled the bill.

Perhaps the most heart-filling of the festival was the grand procession of the Mummoorthi portraits on the opening night around Kamalalayam tank, lasting for six hours what with leading luminaries of Nadaswaram, old and young, like Sheikh Chinnamoulana Sahib, Tirupambaram Brothers, Tiruvizhimizhilai Brothers playing soulful music to the accompaniment of special Thavils of Haridwaramangalam Palanivel and Tiruvalaputhur Kaliyamoorthy.

The South Zone Cultural Centre's generous grant of Rs. one lakh had thus been well utilised. This year's festival also marks the opening of a school of music to propagate the compositions of the Mummoorthis.

S. R.

From A Newsletter

## CONCERT DURATION VIS-A-VIS QUALITY OF MUSIC

(A Youth talk on the topic that reduction in the duration of concerts has led to a general deterioration in quality of classical music)

### Against

Reduction in the duration of concerts may have resulted in the reduction of quantity of classical music; however, its quality has not been compromised with. On the contrary, this reduction is proving to be a testing ground for musicians.

Gone are the days when one sat for hours together listening to a piece and appreciating the flashes of brilliance as and when they came. Today's audience demands the same brilliance but in a much condensed form which demands the maximum from the performer.

Musicians today are still able to provide wholesome and beautiful music despite the reduction in the time.

In the olden days, concerts were confined to the precincts of the auditorium or temple in which the performance took place. But now, thanks to the proliferation of mass media like radio, TV, cassette recordings, etc., the musician has to cater to the likings of a varied strata of audience within a stipulated time.

Today's audience is highly heterogeneous and hard up for time. To expect them to give up all their commitments and appointments and sit through six hours of music would be ridiculous.

Art is the spice of life; like spices, it had better be taken in small quantities.

Classical music is now in an age of highly competitive professionalism, where timing is a major criterion for deciding the quality of classical music.

Chitra Rangan

### For

What effect can a half-an hour concert have on the listener? Can it stay in the mind? Or can it add anything worthwhile to the existing classical tradition? No. An emphatic no. Time passes so quickly that the concert escapes the ears and eventually the mind. It doesn't really serve any purpose. It just brings in a momentary cheer not to the Rasika but to the performer himself. Certainly it adds to the image of the artiste but not to the value of classicism. We can compare this case with that of "Cricket" game: that is the difference between one day cricket and test cricket. Whereas the former can provide momentary excitement and cheer but the latter really is a foolproof method to analyse a player's competence. The reduction in time of the performance has brought the original concert into a mere package of recitations. It is a sort of exercise by rote and not a freeflow of spontaneous ideas.

The implications of this sort of reduction are far and wide. First of all, it reduces the artiste's "manodharma" (whatever little is left of it). Then there



Is no time for pieces like Varnams, Pallavi, Padams, Javalis and Tiruppugazhs which are dying out. Varnams set the pace for a concert; Pallavis help in developing a good "Talakattu" and "Kalapramana", Padams and Javalis are filled with "rasa" and "bhava" from where one can learn the "raga" delineation; Tiruppugazhs help in knowing about the rare Talas. These have become a rare entity in now-a-days concert. The modern day concert provides

something — what some like to call — of everything, an "avial". So in order to revive classical value or value-based concerts an artiste should be given the fullest possible time for him to slowly build up the "manodharma" and also give the opportunity to preserve and add to the gem of classicism.

Jaybee  
(Courtesy : Dhvani)

## AN 'UTSAV' WITH A DIFFERENCE

"A rt is Man's Nature. Nature is God's Art. Life is Laya, Laya that is endless like an ocean. It pervades everything". "Laya is something that goes into Music". "It is the most subtle aspect of rhythm. It pervades all walks of life but becomes subjective when discussed." "Today rhythm in musical parlance has overgrown national trappings, transcended international dimensions and has been identified with the universal way of life."

and objectives of the Percussive Arts Centre have been to promote interest in intricacies of Laya and Tala and for the past 8 years it has tackled the subject from various angles and planks.

Combining Kanchipuram Naina Pillai's birth centenary commemoration and dovetailing laya and its intricacies, a subject close to his heart, in every phase of the celebrations, the festival covered a vast spectrum comprising,

Not tall quotes of dry theorisation but succinct observations of practical enunciation, made at the 9th Taalavaadyotsav '90, organised by the Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore. Giving a talk on "Intricacies of Laya." Laigudi Jayaraman for once got off the stringed sweetness and entered the Layasagara and delved into its intricacies step by step.

Delivering the Palghat Mani Memorial Lecture, T. V. Gopalakrishnan the Mridanga Vidwan who is also a versatile vocalist in Karnatak as well as Hindustani idioms, did a comparative scanning of Tala in both the systems, while Canada-based Trichy Sankaran, this year's recipient of the prestigious Palghat Mani Award, presiding over the symposium on the Role of Laya Vadyas in Classical Music, highlighted the challenging role that a Laya Vidwan played in a concert.

The 5-day festival, save the inaugural and valedictory sessions, (marked with award-presentation ceremonies) hummed with activities morning and evening, all on the subject of rhythm, the one that guides, governs and disciplines life. For that matter the very aims

1. A purposeful discussion on his personality and contribution in different segments such as Pallavi, Tala, Kriti, Tiruppugazh, concert etc;
2. Discussion - cum - demonstration on allied subjects like "Pallavi Trikala", reinforced by renditions of Pallavis in rare Talas and in complex Laya including the Avadhana Pallavi;
3. Laya Vinyasa and Laya Ensemble; and
4. Recitals by Naina's disciples and Shisya Parampara of Kritis which he brought to light and Tiruppugazh he tuned.

Obviously a heavy schedule — symposia in the morning and demonstrative recitals in the evening — judged by any standards and highly educative to the audience.

The highlights of Naina Pillai's personality and contribution brought out by a panel comprising senior advocate V. Krishnamoorthy, K. S. Mahadevan

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(both of whom have had the opportunity to listen to the Titan). B. M. Sundaram and Sulochana Rajendran covered the magnificence of Naina's music — in Paata, Bhava, delivery and pronunciations. Whether Kriti or Padam, Javali or Tiruppugazh, each had its fill, his diction and delivery with the Manodharma paraphernalia, were something to be heard to be believed.

The Pallavis both in the long drawn out Talas or in simple Talas in complex Laya were a feast for music lovers, a taste of which one had from the recital of Chingleput Ranganathan (a disciple of Alathur Brothers) rendering a Tisra Rupakam Khanda Nadai Pallavi and a demonstration by Tirumale Sisters expounding a Tisra Ata Tala Pallavi in 4 Kalai. Their's was the best in the symposium of "Pallavi Trikala", the varieties of Trikalas they rendered involving Kalai-bedham and in Anuloma-Viloma-Prathiloma made it quite challenging yet not losing grip over laya or going off the Sarvalaghu ease — a characteristic unique of Naina's style. And the Sisters have learnt under C. R. Rangaswamy Iyengar, one of Naina's disciples.

In the sizzling session of "Pallavi Trikala", Titta Krishna Iyengar, a veteran musician, brought to note that Naina Pillai was never in the habit of putting the Tala from the start. He would pick up the threads in the middle and show some beats, but the emphasis of Sahitya, the pace, the Laya, would automatically help one follow the flow of the Tala. So perfect was he in his rhythmic grip and Sahitya Vinayasa, he said. The great trend-setter that he was, Naina Pillai also set a negative move that had almost become an accepted trend, pointed out Bangalore Venkataram. The

Arudi occurring in the beat, a must in Pallavi Vinayasa, was violated by Naina and without anyone raising a question it has been absorbed in the tradition, he resented. However, Srikantan referred to this practice prevailing early this century, among the Nadaswara Vidwans whose style Naina Pillai adopted. And this absolved him of any violation.

Why can't complex Laya and melody harmonise? That this was not beyond a musician was proved by Swaminatha Iyer's and Padma Gurudutt's Dwi Avadhana Pallavis. While the maestro rendered his Pallavi simultaneously reckoning Misra Chapu on one hand and Tisra Triputa Khanda Gati on the other, Prema employed Tisra Triputa Sankerna Gati on one and Khanda Triputa Misra Gati on the other. "Employing both the hands on different Talas simultaneously is not a gimmick or feat", said Swaminatha Bhagavathar.

"மனம், புத்தி, சித்தம், அகங்காரம் இந்த நான்கையும் ஒரு நிமிடமாவது அடக்கி லயத்தில் லயித்து பகவானை நினைக்க வைப்பதுதான் இப் பல்லவியின் நோக்கம்."

To the audience it might have been a trying time, but the ease with which they rendered reminded of what Naina undertook as his prime mission — *Asura Sadhaka*.

The role of Laya Vadyas in Classical Music engaged a number of percussion Vidwans in heated discussion. The difference between Tala Vadya and Laya Vadya, the role of the percussion accompanist in a recital, the treatment meted out to Upa-Pakkavadyas which are being relegated to the background were some of the aspects discussed threadbare.

Viewing the topic purely on academic interest and from theoretical aspects Dr. N. Ramanathan of Madras University put forth two thought-provoking questions: (1) Is Laya Vadya absolutely indispensable? Would the classicality be lost if Kritis are rendered with Niraval-Swaras without Laya accompaniment? (2) Is a musical prelude a must before Tala Vadya cutcheri? Or can't there be a Mridangam concert? Can't it have an entity all its own as Solo?

Presiding over the session, Trichy Sankaran, feeling the pulse of the participants, remarked that the scope of the topic was such that the discussions could go on for weeks or for months. However, he pinpointed the necessity of exploring the teaching methodology, the concert player as a team-mate and as a soloist, the need to remain unobtrusive yet not lose identity and the training at various levels before playing for music concert. To Sankaran, the very word "accompanist" sounded a misnomer. His is a challenging role, a Mridangist has to play for a variety of artistes, vocalists and instrumentalists, belonging to different Schools and styles. Could he be assigned just the 3rd role? He is an equal team-mate. He lifts up the whole musical concert edifice by providing a Laya facade, adding a dimension, he asserted. And to be a competent concert Mridangist Sankaran emphatically said one should have been trained to play for Harikatha, dance, Bhajana etc.

The role of Upa-Pakkavadyas was well demonstrated in the Laya Lahari, in ensemble music. How far is the full-bench cutcheri feasible in modern environ, given the tight time-frame concert and audience response, is anybody's guess. Save a couple of instru-

ments, like Ghatam, and Kanjira, the rest could be employed in creating ensemble music like Laya Lahari which has a great entertaining potential. The one that the students of Ayyanar College of Music presented with 11 percussion instruments including Chende, Dholak Gettu etc., in a vocal concert by T. V. Gopalakrishnan, was certainly well-received. It was a full-bench Cutcheri with a difference — blossoming talents trying their hands accompanying a veteran vocalist and playing an 'ensemble solo'!

To cap it all, eminent jurists and administrators like Justice Venkataramiah (inaugural address), Justice Mohan (presenting the award) and J. Veeraraghavan (Valedictory address) who graced the functions delved into Laya too.

Besides Palghat Mani Award, one more award was instituted this year in memory of Palani Subramania Pillai by his disciple Erode Gururajan and the first recipient was Kaniira Vidwan H. P. Ramachar. With both the awardees Trichy Sankaran and Ramachar providing soulful rhythmic support, the curtain was rung down on the Utsav with a sweet-sustaining Lalgudi-G. J. R. Krishnan violin duet.

It is commendable that Percussive Arts Centre has taken up such educative projects with a zeal and the audio-video documentation should be a valuable record for posterity.

With the financial support coming from the Central and State Departments of Culture, the South-Centre-Zone and Sangeet Natak Akademy, the Percussive Arts Centre could in course of time extend its 'theme' and pave way for a well-knit musical archives.

S. R.

## CULTURAL SCENE IN BOMBAY

**F**irst week of April '90, synchronised with Rama Navami which as usual was celebrated in devotion and sincerity all over — Matunga, Goregaon, Borivli and also elsewhere in the suburbs. Lord Ramachandra symbolises the ideal man for all devout Hindus and the different aspects of His multi-faceted personality are always highlighted and talked about by learned pundits in their discourses during the festival time. The wonder of wonders in such discourses is that one never gets tired or bored, listening to them year to year. Goregaon carves out for itself a pride of place in scheduling scholarly yet lucid interpretations regarding Lord Rama's personality. True, this year too it was a grand affair at Goregaon, Bangurnagar, Ram Mandir.

As an extra item for people of Goregaon, a vocal music concert of Panagudi S. Ramachandran under the auspices of Thyagabrahma Aradhana Sabha, Goregaon, had been arranged at the Ayyappan Temple premises. The performance was in good form and the complementary support on Violin and Mridangam was provided by Smt. Kalyani Shankar and P. Sriram respectively.

At Matunga, (end of April), under the auspices of Bharatiya Music & Arts Society, one could listen to the vocal recital of Smt. Meenakshi Ananthakrishnan. It was rather a handicap that her voice on that day was playing rather truant. All the same, her handling of Madhyamavati was good. In general, the performance reflected an above-average standard. The recital lacked the required depth at a few important

places. Perhaps, if her voice had co-operated more satisfactorily, she would have achieved better impact.

Sowmya Subbaraman and Master Shyam provided support at the concert. Sowmya gave subdued violin support. While one does not desire it should be aggressive, it was felt, Sowmya could have registered her clear identity and contribution in more specific and concrete terms. She has the potential to make it. One would hope, her stature as a violin accompanist would suffuse good lustre in due course of time. Master Shyam, the young boy, has clear and fast moving fingers at his instrument.

Bharatiya again featured in May a vocal recital of Alathoor Venkataraman. The musical numbers chosen by him contributed to a gripping impact in general, while one could observe that his voice tends to run rough. At certain points, it even falls short of the required pitch. Regular practice and opportunities for singing in public would definitely condition his performance towards securing elegant proportions. As a chip of the block, true to his father Alathoor Subbu's style, he places accent on a clean rendering of compositions, punctuated with Bhava and muscle at due places. Svaraprasthara denotes dabbling in 'kanakku' for the most part, at the hands of the young artiste. Venkataraman may note that more often than not, he tends to sacrifice 'sowkhybhava' in the process. Abhogi was well dealt with. The traditional contour of the melody received a completeness in the Alapana. It

satisfied both the layman and the cogniscenti.

Violinist Balakrishnan has to go a long way. Why blame him? Local talents have to get sufficient opportunities at the instance of patrons and Sabhas. Parthasarathy on Mridangam gave good and mature support.

Early in June, Nadalaya of Andheri conducted its annual festival. The venue was Dinanath Mangeskar Hall, Vile Parle. On the first day, the maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman with his daughter Vijayalakshmi gave a violin duet, accompanied by R. Ramesh on Mridangam. It was his usual fare.

The concert of T. R. Balamani and Ranjani Chander on the second day of the festival had a point to focus attention. It was a two and a half hour concert arranged on the Ariyakudi model of presentation. The assortment in the main, consisted of Asaveri Varnam, *Vallabhanayakasya* (Begada), *Arulseyavenum* (Rasikapriya). *Enduku Peddala* (Sankarabharanam) and a Karaharapriya Pallavi in Adi Tala. Ranjani's melody concept is clear and her Poorvikalyani Alapana was in good form. Her contribution in the manner of certain flashes and subtle aesthetic touches was well received, to make special mention.

Balamani's delineation of Sankarabharanam and Karaharapriya made a good impact. A clean rendering of compositions in good rhythmic gear is noticeably a feature that distinguishes Balamani's school. Sivakumar (Violin) and Nandakumar (Mridangam) gave good support making the concert an over-all success.

S. Ramachandran

Bhakta Rasika Ranjani Sabha took the credit of paying tribute to Ariyakudi, the father of the modern concert form, on his birth centenary on May, '90. That too befittingly with a concert of Mani Krishnaswami, a musician who personifies all that stands for Sampradaya, so dear to Ariyakudi.

Mani's *pataantara paddhati* and presentational quality are something young aspirants should emulate. Hers is not exciting music. In the sedate pace and fine-tuned pitch there is musical bliss. And her delivery and diction encompass an artistry and imagination that is deceptively simple yet enduring.

Her *Nannu Vidachi* (Ritigowla) and *Kaddanuvuriki* (Todi) were two masterpieces in the concert besides the Kalyani Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi that stood for vitality and subtlety.

Accompanying her were Meera Narayanan (Violin), Rajasekhar (Mridangam) and Sukanya Ramgopal (Ghatam) who rose as one man lifting the programme in substance and sustenance.

Among the talents presented by various organisations, Shobha Sekhar's at Little Theatre (NCPA) and Thara Vijayaraghavan's at Naadha Anjali merit mention. A common feature with both is that they are not endowed with powerful voice. But their pliancy perched on clean Sruti, and solid paatantara lend their music the ease and pleasantness.

Shobha's mainstay was Sankarabharanam (*Swararaga Sudha*) which she delineated with an aesthetic impulse and sustaining verve. Swayed by the musical essence of *Nannu Vidachi* (Ritigowla) she rendered it with absorption.

There was relish and involvement in Thara's recital which at times suffered from inaudible modulation. Suddha Saveri (Taayē Tripurasundari) and Todi (Karthikeya) stood out for their involved improvisation while *Innamum Oru Dararam* (Yadukula Kambhoji) made an impact for the sheer bhava of rendition.

Accompanying both the artistes on Mridangam was Sriram who gave an inspired support. He has the feel for the song-structure and invests his Thani with crisp combinations.

It was a memorable moment in their lives, a dream come true, when the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya students (of advanced class) paid their pranams to the Trinity of Music at their birth place Tiruvarur, participating in the Mummoorthi Jayanthi Celebrations (April-May).

Singing the Swarajathis at Shyama Sastri's house and Dikshitar's Kamalam-ba Navavarnams in Dikshitar Mantapam the students could feel the sanctity of the Sahitya, the solemnity of the occasion and this was abundantly echoed in their evocative renditions, and were well received by Rasikas thronged there.

Though not officially billed for Tyagaraja Jayanti day, the students made their oblation by rendering the Sri Raga Pancharatnam at his serene abode.

In the dance segment two young Bharata Natyam dancers hailing from eminent schools showed their prowess.

The "flowing grace", so characteristic of Chitra Visweswaran's style was evident in her chela Ramaa Subramaniam's recital. Endowed with a sculpted figure, expressive face and innate rhythmic sense, this danseuse reproduced her mentor with an abandon, with certain overenthusiasm too. Each item reminded one of Chitra's 'sodukus' and sweeps. Madurai Sethuraman's music enthralled the audience at the Godrej Academy (NCPA) that sultry evening of April.

Saipriya Viswanathan, a disciple of Smt. Nalini Raghu of Pandanallur style, has come a long way, now settling to a controlled artistry and refined expression expounded by her Guru.

A recipient of the National Cultural Scholarship Saipriya in a recent recital showed her mettle in a repertoire that comprised a rare Sankirna Alarippu and Adi Khanda Nadai Tillana in the traditional margam.

The highlight of the recital was Nalini's melodious Nattuvangam and Sarayu Srinivasan's evocative music.

— KINNARI

"Music does not proceed from the throat alone. There is a music of the mind, of the senses and of the heart."

— Mahatma Gandhi

## BOOK REVIEW :

### A LAUDABLE EFFORT

*Karnataka Sangeetha Sastra : Theory of Carnatic Music.*  
By Sangeetha Vidwan A. S. Panchapakasa Iyer.

Translated into English by T. T. Vijayaraghavan, Ganamrutha Prachuram, Madras.  
Pages; 98; Price : Rs. 30/-

Usually students of music are recipients of information imparted by their teachers. Necessarily, it tends to be brief and confined to essential aspects, since the orientation is for turning out the performing artiste, where top priority spells out effective and aesthetic appeal to the general audience. This however does not mean that knowledge of theory is placed at a discount by the teachers in their effort. What I try to make a point is that, it only adds to the stature of the performing artiste when he/she comes to be acclaimed as both a Lakshya and Lakshana Vidwan/Vidushi.

As matters stand today, knowledge of theory regarding Karnatak music is scattered at different places like books of Prof. Sambamoorthy, numerous articles, seminars, papers and discussions by learned Vidwans. Admittedly, making theoretical knowledge available for the ardent student in a brief volume, has been a long-felt need. Vidwan A. S. Panchapakasa Iyer's book under reference fulfils this need in an abundant measure. As a vidwan belonging to the well-known Alathoor 'parampara' and in the light of the background of his teaching experience over several decades, this book is proof of a laudable effort on his part.

The book introduces itself with significant information regarding origin of music, Sruti concept and Sapta Svaras. The case of adequacy of 22 Srutis being distinctly acceptable to the ear and restricting to that as the base, has been well articulated. The handling of svarasthanas each in its strength and frequencies at different degrees of intensity and as a result, the emergence of a Raga or melody in its own specific identity has been well explained. The popular Venkatamakhi scheme of 72 Melakartas and the Katapayadi formula to come to know the actual number of a particular Melakarta raga, has been lucidly explained.

The Sthayis in Raga Alapana, the procedure of delineation, the permissible Sancharas, special characteristics contributing to the identity of certain melodies, the evolution and development of Ragas at the hands of geniuses and stalwarts of the past, explained by Vidwan Panchapakasa Iyer fulfils a healthy and positive dissemination of knowledge.

Illustration of 20 Ragas pointing to their Sancharas, importance and Svarasthanas characteristically associated with each of them is something



significant to note. Gamakas and their vital role in Karnatak music and Vadi, Samvadi, Anuvadi, Vivadi Swaras have been well explained. As additional information, method of writing compositions/songs through notation has been vividly indicated to help students. The Suladi Sapta Tala scheme and its modifications have been clearly indicated besides the 108 Talas and the variety of rhythm beats practised in folk music.

However, under Pallavi chapter, the role of the Laya vidwan and the 'Vinyasam' on rhythm expected of him has not been indicated. The improvisation in this connection so as to rhythmically reproduce the Pallavi theme and its design would point to the originality of the Laya vidwan. One would suggest this be focused on. Again, if present day trends are any indication, the vidwan on percussion, is seen to overdo rhythm in the concert. The element of 'Anusaranai' is very vital as the Kritis are being rendered. Giving the importance to 'Sarvalagu' and in elegant conformity with the 'MARGA' governing the composition of the different kritis, the Laya vidwan is expected to provide the rhythm support; but not at any rate, a pedantic gibberish of rhythm right from the beginning till the end of the concert. Pallavi 'Vinyasam' and 'Thani' are, no doubt, two specific stages for the Laya vidwan to highlight his mastery. Sangeetha Sastra on rhythm and even compositions of Tyagaraja, for an example, define the limiting line regarding "Mridanga Tala". In a brief manner, scientific knowledge regarding this aspect requires to be disseminated.

By and large, the book is an excellent piece of work and all alike should own it in their library.

S. Ramachandran

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"The secret of getting real joy and satisfaction out of one's work lies in developing a passion for excellence for its own sake. Such a passion is a hard taskmaster, but its achievement brings a thrill of satisfaction that neither money, nor position, nor power can give."

H. W. Prentis  
(Courtesy : A Garland)

## "APOORVIKA"

**H**ead of a Laali in Piloo? That the Hindustani melodies were known in the Karnatak idiom long back and had been prevalent in the Bhajana tradition becomes a historical fact from a Laali Sri Purandaradasa had composed in Piloo. Incidentally, it serves as an evidence to the Sangita Pitamaha composing Utsava Sampradaya Keerthanas prior to the advent of Sri Tyagaraja whose keerthanas on Utsava Sampradaya are well known.

Karnatak music exudes through its Bhava — Raga — Tala some rare nuances and charm of its own. Devoted to this rare sector — compositions with rare thematic content, with rare Bhava, in rare Ragas and set to rare rhythmic patterns, Dr. V. V. Srivatsa, the technomusicologist conceived a lec-dem, called "Apoorvika" and conducted it at the Bhaktha Rasika Ranjani Sabha, early April, 1990.

The serious thinker — artiste that he is VVS fathoms other mores besides music, such as philosophy, scriptures, aesthetics, languages etc., to bring into focus what he calls the fusion of the "Gandharva Vidya" and "Sangita Kala", the scientific and artistic effulgence of music, the harmony of Lakshana and Lakshya.

That the session was enlightening goes without saying. An eloquent speaker, VVS has the capacity to take the audience along with his musical perception, with lucid interpretation, vivid illustrations and apt demonstrations. The fund of information in his research 'kit', his robust delivery (spiced with humor-

ous punch), substantiated by practical demonstrations by eminent musicians made the session educative as well as enjoyable.

Apoorvika comprises 16 select compositions in tune with "the Shodashopachar, the 16 ritualistic offerings during worship", out of which 3 were chosen for Bhava, 5 for Raga, 4 for Raga and Bhava, 2 for Tala, 1 for Bhava and Tala and 1 for Raga and Tala. And these cover a wide range of Rasas viz., Bhakti, Roudra, Adbhuta, Karuna, Sringara, Vira, Shanta and Shoka.

The first in the series was Dikshitar's *Sri Guruguhamoorthi* in Udaya Ravichandrika which highlighted the entire Guru-Sishya relationship. That Udaya Ravichandrika and Suddha Dhanyasi are not identical Ragas and that Nishada makes all the difference was well brought out by Prof. Vedavalli's rendition of this Kirti. The Raga Lakshana and the Swara characteristics enumerated by VVS were convincing.

Is Krishnavatara superior or Ramavatara? So poses VVS and proceeds to evaluate, quoting extensively from hymns and compositions and contends that Krishna was superior as he steered the whole course of events. Expounding this is the rare gem, again from Dikshitar, *Krishnananda Mukunda*, not heard before, set in Gowlipantu, a Dwimadhyanta Raga (having the twin Madhyamams) which excels in its plainness. This is the only Kirti Dikshitar composed in this Raga, we are told.

A tinge of humour characterises VVS' Atana in which *Atla Balukudu*, a Vilamba Kala piece of Tyagaraja, again a rare phenomenon, was rendered. The slow piece suited the Nindasthuthi, quite rare in compositions of Tyagaraja who still was confirmed in his conviction of 'Saranagati Tatva'.

The ancient Raga of Dhanyasi, figures next in *Dalachinavaru* of Annaswami Sastri, Syama Sastri's grandson who is said to have composed only twelve songs.

Vaikunta is not far away, it's just a "call away" sings Purandaradasa. *Onde Koogalate* in Kalyani is another of Apoorvika. A rare theme of the child's love for its parents (should we say the observe of Vatsalya?) is embedded in Tyagaraja's *Naayeda Vanchana* composed in Nabhomani.

The origin of Kambhoji Raga, the links between "Yadukula" and "Kam-

bhoja" makes an interesting probe. However, the use of Yadukula Kambhoji right from Thevaram days makes it very much Desi. And Tyagaraja's *Entanusu Sairindu* evokes the Karuna rasa from its very serene gait.

Shoka that is steeped in Patnam Subramania Iyer's Mukari kriti *Eppudu Kripagalguno* comes to life in D.K. Pattammal's recorded version played for demonstration. That Abheri should be with Suddha Daivata and have no link with Bhimplas was made clear by Vedavalli's rendition of Shyama Sastri's *Ninnuvina Marigalada*.

A Laali in Piloo, a Manipravala Padam, Javali, the Simhanandana Tala Tillana of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer were among the rest of the Apoorvika repertoire. A meticulously prepared presentation which whets one's appetite for exploring further.

#### KINNARI

COMPOSITION	RAGA	TALA	COMPOSER
1. Sri Guruguhamoorte	Udayaravi Chandrika	Roopakam	Muthuswami Dikshitar
2. Krishnananda Mukunda	Gowlipantu	Misra Chapu	Muthuswami Dikshitar
3. Atla Balukudu	Atana	Adi	Tyagaraja
4. Dalachinavaru	Dhanyasi	Adi	Annasami Shastri
5. Onde-Koogalate	Kalyani	Ata	Purandaradasa
6. Naayeda Vanchana	Nabhomani	Adi	Tyagaraja
7. Entanusu Sairindu	Yadukula Kambhoji	Adi	Tyagaraja
8. Eppudu Krupagalguno	Mukhari	Adi	Patnam Subramania Iyer
9. Ninnuvina Marigalada	Suddha Abheri	Rupakam	Syama Sastri
10. Neelangam Harim	Neelambari	Khanda Eka	Muthuswami Dikshitar
11. Paratpara Tava	Sankarabharanam	Khanda Roopaka	V. V. Srivatsa
12. Unnai Maravanmal	Anaritavarshini	Adi	Vedanayagam Pillai
13. Laali Laali	Piloo	Adi	Purandaradasa
14. Taruneegyan (Padam)	Dwijavanti	Tripata	Swati Tirunal
15. Rao Rammani (Javali)	Bihag	Adi	Samalkot Bhayankarachari
16. Gowri Nayaka (Tillana)	Kanada	Simhanandana	Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer

#### A 'Chela' Reminisces

### THE 'MIGHTY' VOLETI & 'POWERFUL' PUDUCODE

A few months abroad on a teaching assignment, and on returning to India I find that the music world has lost several veterans, some of whom I knew personally.

Voleti Venkateswarlu, among them. I recall the first time that I heard him, years ago. I had just moved to Vizag and started learning some Padams from Dr. S. Pinakapani. One afternoon, there was a music recital over the radio which sounded uncannily like Dr. Pinakapani, and yet I knew there was something that set it apart, in spite of the incredible similarity in style and voice timbre. Voleti's name was announced at the end, and I was intrigued. A month later, I met him when I went to Vijayawada for a broadcast. I had not yet learnt Telugu and was fumbling hesitantly while discussing the items for my recital when I walked Voleti and suggested, in fluent English, that I speak in English. He was perhaps one of the very few professional musicians at that time who had a university degree. And yet, utter humility and a manner that was unpretentious to a fault marked his personality.

#### COLOSSAL VIDWAT, COURTEOUS DEMEANOUR

Over the years he conducted and produced several special programmes for All India Radio (where he served for three decades as music producer) and as participant I learned several compositions from him. His gentle and unruffled manner extended the same cour-

tesy alike to seasoned veterans as well as young beginners like me. There was nothing at all in his demeanour to betray his colossal vidwat and extraordinarily rich repertoire — no antics (musical or otherwise, on or off stage), no strutting, and no tantrums. He would come into the studios unobtrusively, gait as sedate as the style of music he came to make all his own, and go through the day's schedule with a minimum of fuss and a minimum of words. Perhaps that was his strength as well as his weakness, for in a field where "pushing oneself" has become a prime requirement for honours, he did not receive half of what was legitimately his due.

#### 'PANI' BANI

Dr. Pinakapani trained several musicians in the Andhra region, but it was Voleti who came to be recognised as the undisputed torch-bearer of that particular "Pani bani". And like a true artiste, what he received from his own Guru he passed on, abundantly and unstintingly, to those who were eager to learn.

His Sangita Sikshana series of lessons from AIR Vijayawada enriched my musical growth as it did for several hundreds of others. Once, in doubt about a word in the Surati kriti *Sri Venkata girishamalokaye* that he was teaching on the air, I wrote to him; he not only sent a prompt reply but wrote down for me the entire Sahitya, in both Telugu and English. He always gave twice what he was asked for.

On another occasion, he decided to record an interview with me in Telugu for a "Sangita Charcha" (discussions on music) series that he was producing. I panicked, wondering if my fluency in Telugu would adequately meet grammatical standards, but with characteristic generosity he brushed aside my remonstrations and interviewed me himself, at length.

Subsequently it was my turn to interview him when he received the Sangeet Natak Akademi award and I was asked to emcee the ceremony for television. He spoke at length about the need for strict adherence to classicism. None the less, it was not as if he had a closed mind, for I had heard him sing a Thumri with marvellous phrasings in authentic Hindustani idiom and was told that he had got so carried away by his enthusiasm for Hindustani music after hearing Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan that he had to be restrained from giving up Karnatak music altogether. Had he followed that momentary inclination, the loss would have been entirely that of Karnatak music's, for he remained, over the last two decades, the one musician from whom one could expect "solid" and weighty music that pleased both the heart and the head — and never be disappointed.

Poor health — and perhaps less than a fair share of a lucky conjunction of the stars — dogged him. When he was chosen for the Swar Vilas award of the Sur Singar Samsad in Bombay he had to cancel his trip and concert at the last minute because of the death of a grandchild. When the award was later presented to him during a concert at the Shanmukhananda Sabha, he made a brief speech that was as fine-tuned and

well-strung as his music. Whether it was a Tyagaraja kriti or a rare Dikshitar composition, or the songs of lesser-known composers, he sang them all with the same attention to detail, authenticity and faithful adherence to *sampradaya* (which had a high place in his scheme of priorities).

In 23 years of interviewing musicians for articles, Voleti was the only one I came across who emphasised the importance of "good rasikas" as one of the determinants of good standards in performed music. "It is good rasikas who enthuse a musician to give of his best," he said; "if the listeners do not want to hear good music, the artiste will not feel like offering it." It was typical of him to attribute credit to others as listeners, rather than to himself as a performer. He even named a few rasikas whose requests for rakti ragas like Sahanana and Begada, he said, enthused him to delve into these melodies and explore their richness in detail. True, demand creates supply, as the commercial world too will concede.

I sent him a copy of the article that I wrote quoting him, but he did not acknowledge it, which was most unlike him. Later I heard that he was ill. And now he is gone. A fine musician, and a fine person.

There are not many who can claim to be both

Pudukode K. Krishnamurthy, who passed away some time ago, was another veteran who did not receive the kind of recognition he deserved. He was one of my earliest teachers, at

Delhi when I was a school girl and more interested in hopscotch than Harikamboji. He would not only teach me but stay on, extending the lesson to much beyond the customary one hour, and I would often break out in tears, and he would chide me, saying that he was taking the trouble only because I was able to receive all that he had to offer. Only, at that time, I was too immature and young to appreciate it.

He later shifted to the south and subsequently taught at Kalakshetra, which was a recognition of his solid moorings in classicism. (He was a disciple of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar). Like Voleti, he too had a fine repertoire of rare compositions — his *Lokavana chatura* (Begada) and *Karuna nidhi ilalo* (Todi). Thisra Gati, I remember in particular. His Pallavi renderings too were marked by highly intricate and technically complicated delineations. Like Voleti, he too never pandered to the gallery and resorted to no populist gimmicks. And like Voleti, he too tried his hand at Hindustani music during his stint at Delhi, enrolling for classes at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, but he never let this acquaintance with the northern system colour his Karnatak renderings.

In spite of his musical stature institutions like the NCPA never featured him — perhaps because he never "asked"

to be featured. He was featured in the National Programme of All India Radio and the annual Sammelan concerts but died without receiving any of the top honours that should have been rightly his; he never went abroad, and never strode down the corridors of power.

Octogenarian Vamanrao Deshpande was another musical acquaintance of mine who passed away recently. I had some months ago, been asked to review his very readable book *Between Two Thanpuras*, and he wrote to me after reading the review. I was looking forward to meeting him again, when he came for a meeting of the Indian Musicological Society, but I could not attend that meeting because of an engagement out of town. He wrote again to say that I was not to visit Pune (where he had settled) without calling on him, and had even given me detailed instructions on how to get to his house. As luck would have it, my trip to Pune kept getting postponed repeatedly for one reason or the other, and then I went away abroad. A prolific writer on music, Deshpande was articulate, dispassionate in his assessments, and one of those rare connoisseurs who straddled the performer-theorist divide with ease. The Hindustani music world will miss him.

Sakuntala Narasimhan



## A LAW UNTO HIMSELF

'Phenomenon' is an understatement to describe Veena maestro S. Balachander who passed away in April, 1990, in the steel city of Bhilai, where he had gone for a concert.

A child prodigy with little formal education in music or academics, Balachander rose to be a colossus in the field of fine arts. A curious mixture of contrasts — of aesthetics and pride, intense concentration and flamboyant dynamism, of humility and audacity — he was at the centre of any issue that rocked the music world. "A dynamic person of unending creative and physical energy," someone once remarked, "he was a law unto himself."

He was his own formidable spokesman, the turbulent and headstrong asserter of his own rights. "His collision with the Music Academy, Madras for a prime slot for the Veena, his calling off the bluff of Balamurali on the 'invention of ragas' and his one-man Swati Tirunal tirade are only too well known to need any reiteration.

His multi-faceted talent as an actor-producer or as Akashwani artiste pale before Balachander, the Vainika, the musician. It was in the field of music that he blazed a new bold trail.

The house in Nadu Street, Mylapore — Balachander's childhood home — was the hub of musical activity. There musicians met, practised and discussed their work at their leisure. Balachander's father Sundaram Iyer, the patron of all these activities, practised more music than law for which he qualified. Born in such an environment and with an elder brother and sister totally devoted to music, it was not difficult for the young 'Chandru' to pick up the musical alphabet. Before five, he began experimenting with a range of instruments.

There was no instrument he did not touch. From Sitar to Bulbul Tarang, from Kanjira to Tabla, he tried his hand at everything before finally settling down with the Veena. It would be an understatement to say that he delved deeper into the depth of the Veena, its deflative magnificence. He brought to the Veena an entirely new tonal dimension, a depth nearer to human voice potential. And he made the 'contact mike' an integral part of his performing aid to augment even subtle nuances.

Like single-line drawings, Balachander could spin patterns out of a single twang. A whole octave would reverberate in microtonal elegance from a twang on a single fret or off-fret deflection.

A voracious reader, a witty conversationalist and a popular speaker and a writer, he was the cynosure of all gatherings. His talks were as deeply thought-provoking as his music adventurous.

His constant exposure to music at home more than activated his musical instincts. He learnt everything by listening. He once said, "The responsibility of a learner is to be a good listener also. Learning to sing or play is only one part of it; the other equally important part is to cultivate the proper listening attitude and aptitude. It will pay greater dividends ... hearing so much of so many styles ... doing a lot of shifting ...".

Balachander was almost a fanatic in his passion for melody, the supremacy of Ragas in Indian music. Laya (rhythm) is only subservient to melody, he would contend, save in the purely extemporised segment of Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi, where rhythm shared an equal status with melody and Sahitya enunciation. He did not rest content with this. He went on to prove it. His monumental work, the 12 LP records on the 72 Melakarta Ragas and his Ragamalika Tanam stringing 45 ragas in a melodious garland (without any percussion accompaniment) were not only a challenge he took upon himself to 'prove' the supremacy of melody but also to bequeath to posterity as his contribution that would serve as a lexicon to musicians all over the world.

Though his battle against what he called, 'the Swati Tirunal myth' left him an embittered soul, the lone crusader never lost his spirit or devotion to music. The winner of numerous awards and honours, and a performer par excellence, this Padma Bhushan was also the greatest showman of his time, doing everything in style. Now that he is gone nothing can fill the void he has left behind. Even his style of music may not linger for he trained very few disciples in the art of his distinctive method. The world has lost a fine musician and a fine human being.

Sulochana Rajendran  
(Courtesy : Free Press Journal)





# ‘அரியக்குடி’ நினைவாஞ்சலி

‘அரியக்குடி, — ஆம்! ஓர் அரிய குடி மகன். தமிழ் நாட்டின் ஸங்கீத பொற்காலத் தைப் பாமர மக்களுடன் பகிர்ந்து கொண்ட அரிய கலைஞன்.

அன்னாரின் அரிய குணதீயம் கீழ்க் கண்ட ஒரே உதாரணத்தில் உள்ளங்கை தெவ்விக்களி போல் தெள்ளென விளங்கும்.

ஒரு சமயம் பெங்களூரில் ஒரு பெரிய திடலில் அரியக்குடி ராமானுஜ அய்யங்காரின் கச்சேரி நடந்து கொண்டிருந்தது. ரஸிகர்கள் திரளாகக் கூடியிருந்தனர். தன்னை மறந்த காணொப்பணத்தில் அய்யங்கார் “எத்தரோ மஹானுபாவுலு” என்று அனைத்து மேதைகளுக்கும் ஸ்ரீராகத்தில் அஞ்சலி செய்து கொண்டிருந்தார். பஞ்சரத்னம் நிறைவுற்றது. எழுந்தது கரகோஷத்துடன் “Once more” ஒலி. நாடகங்களில் இவ்வாறு கோஷமிடுவது அந்நாளைய வழக்கம். அன்று கச்சேரி நடந்த இடமும் நாடகத் திடலே! கண் இமைக்கும் முன் அய்யங்காரின் கண்டத்திலிருந்து எழுந்தது “எத்தரோ மஹானுபாவுலு”, Once again!

என்னளவும் தொய்வில்லை. அசிரத்தை வில்லை. மனம் ஒன்றி வயிற்று, மறுபடியும் அப்பஞ்சரத்தினைத் தை முழுமையாகப் பாடி முடிந்தார்.

கச்சேரி முடிந்தது. அரியக்குடியின் பாமரரிகளும் அன்றைய சட்ட மாணுக்கரும், இன்றைய சட்ட வல்லுனராய் பெங்களூரில் பணியாற்றும் வக்கீல் கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி அவர்கள் அய்யங்காரை அனுவிக்க கேட்டாராம். “ஏன், ‘Once more’ என்பதற்காக முழுமையும், ஒரு சங்கதி கூட விடாமல் விரிவாகப் பாடினீர்களே. அலுக்கவில்லையா?”

“அனுபவித்துக் கேட்கிறார்கள், ஆண்டவன் திருதாமத்தை எத்தனை முறை பாடினான் என்பதை, அலுக்கவா செய்யும்” என்று ராம் அரியக்குடி. என்னே அவர் பக்குவம்,

ரஸிகர்களின் ரஸனையை அவர் மதித்ததற்கு இதைவிட சான்று வேண்டுமோ!

ரஸிகர்களின் கருத்தை ஈர்ப்பது மட்டுமல்ல அவர் நோக்கம். அவர்களின் ரஸனையை அதிகரித்து மேன்மேலும் ஸங்கீதத்தில் ஈடுபாடு செய்விக்க எண்ணினார். குறுகிய காலத்திலேயே எண்ணத்தை செயலுமாக்கினார்.

அவர் கற்றது நூற்றுக்கணக்கான க்ருதிகள். ஸங்கீத மும்மூர்த்திகளின் படைப்புகள் மட்டுமல்ல. பிற்காலத்திய வாக்கேயக்காரர்களின் உருப்படிகளும். மற்றும் பதம், ஜாவளி, தில்லானா போன்ற ‘துக்கடா’களும் என அவர் வசம் ஒரு புதையலே இருந்தது. தவிர தேவாரம், திவ்ய பிரபந்தம், பாகரம் என பட்டியல் நீண்டு கொண்டே போகும். இவைகளை வைத்து ஒரு புதிய கச்சேரி சம்பிரதாயத்திற்கே வித்திட்டார்.

விருவிரிப்பான நடை, ரஞ்சகமான ராகங்கள், பல தாள வர்க்கங்கள், பலரின் க்ருதிகள், பளிச்சென்று ஆலாபனை, ஜிஜ்ஜிவென்று ஸ்வரக் கோர்வைகள், நறுக்குத்தெரித்தாற் போல் நிரவல், இத்யாதி உத்திகளுடன் அவர் ஒரு சபாரஞ்சகமான சம்பிரதாயத்தையே உருவாக்கினார். இதில் சம்பிரதாயத்திலிருந்து என்னளவும் பிறழவில்லை. அளிக்கும் முறையில்தான் மனதை அன்றும் பாங்கு. ஒரு பங்கீடு, எதிலும் ஒரு நிறைவு. மூன்று மணி நேரத்தில் மனோதர்மத்தின் ஆழமுட. மனோரஞ்ஜகத்தின் கிஞ்சிற்றும் ஒருங்கே சேர்ந்து, ராகம், தாளம் பல்லவியுடன், க்ருதிகள், பதம், ஜாவளி, தில்லானா, பாகரம், விருத்தம் என ஸங்கீதம் நர்த்தனம் புரிந்து ரஸிகர்களை ஆட்கொண்டு ஸன்மார்க்கத்தில் அவர்கள் மனதை ஒன்ற வைத்தாரென்றால் அது மிகையாது. இன்றைய கச்சேரி சம்பிரதாயத்தின் பிதா அரியக்குடி. அவர் நூற்றுண்டில் அவர் வழி நடப்போம்.